AFTER THE BATTLE

OBERSALZBERG

Number 9

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Fax: (020) 8555 7567
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Overloon extracts from the *6th Guards Tank Brigade* by Patrick Forbes, Sampson Low, Marston & Co. and notes on the Mitchell aircraft history by R. V. P. Burgerhout.

Hitler at Landsberg extracts from *Hitler was my friend* by Heinrich Hoffmann, Burke.

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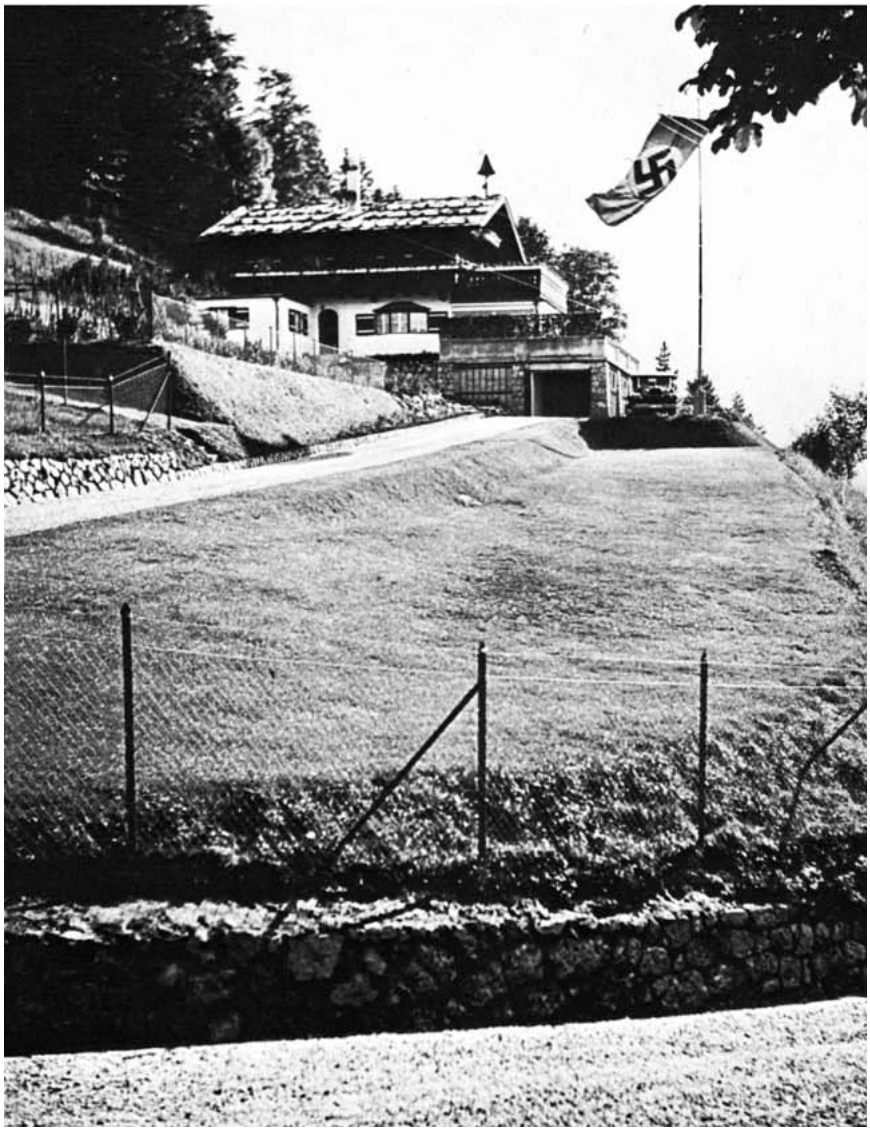
QUARTERLY

Above: The small cabin called the 'Kampfhaus' on Obersalzberg where Hitler finished his book 'Mein Kampf' after his release from Landsberg prison. No trace of it is left today. Below: Haus Wachenfeld situated nearby, was purchased by Hitler and converted into the Berghof (Berta Geiss).



Opposite page, top: Adolf Hitler with his sheepdog Blondi at Haus Wachenfeld in 1934 (Ullstein). Bottom: Crowds of admirers pass the entrance to the reconstructed Berghof during the time when a visit to the area was permissible (Bundesarchiv).

OBERSALZBERG

It has been said that, at the end of World War II, the British had the German industry, the Russians the agriculture, the French the fortresses and the Americans the scenery.

Picturesque towns such as Heidelberg, Munich and Nuremberg fell in the American sphere of influence, together with perhaps the most beautiful of all the scenic attractions—Berchtesgaden in the Bavarian Alps. This region has been called the 'Yellowstone Park' of Germany—an area of grandiose scenes of nature tucked away in the south-eastern corner backing on to Austria.

Its connection with Adolf Hitler began after his unsuccessful attempt to seize power in Munich on November 9, 1923. Hitler was imprisoned at Landsberg and, following his release, sought refuge in the Obersalzberg. He stayed in a small cottage called the Kampfhaus (where he wrote part of 'Mein Kampf'), and among the local residents found some benefactors and friends. By 1928 he was living in Haus Wachenfeld which he rented from the widow of a Hamburg businessman for RM100 per month (approximately £10). Later, royalties from his book enabled him to purchase the house and rebuild it on a lavish scale.

Above: Hitler's study on the first floor of the Berghof, scene of the meeting with the Austrian Chancellor, Dr. Kurt von Schuschnigg on February 12, 1938, prior to the Anschluss of Austria (Bauer).

Above: The Berghof personally designed and planned by Hitler. This is the dining room—Hitler sat on the near side of the table on the left; on his right Eva Braun, then Martin Bormann (Bauer).

Above and right: Two views of the main room; the tapistry hides the projector used for private film shows (Bauer). Below: A Hoffmann group photograph taken on the steps on April 20, 1943, Hitler's 54th birthday—on Hitler's right arm Eva Braun; on his left Frau Schonmann Marion. Martin Bormann is in the right foreground. Others in the group are Albert Speer, Eva Braun's mother and sister, and Frau Bormann (A photograph from the US National Archives of Seized WWII Enemy Records).

Hitler's personal photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann, and Goebbels' propaganda staff billed it 'The small lodge of Volkskanzler Hitler', and it was given the name Berghof which means 'a neat farm building with the characteristics of a mountain house'. This image was soon altered after Hitler's rise to power in 1933. However, during all its reconstructions the name Berghof was retained to give an impression of modesty to the thousands of visitors who flocked to the area in the early years of the Nazi regime.

Initially, Rudolf Hess, Hitler's secretary, was commissioned by Hitler to negotiate with the local farmers to sell their property on the Obersalzberg mountain. Large sums changed hands, but those unwilling to sell soon did so under pressure and threats from the Party. When Hess was assigned to other duties, Martin Bormann carried on the task of reconstructing the whole Obersalzberg area.

Within a short period ten square kilometres had been 'purchased' from private owners, the forest administration and the community of Salzberg, and these were declared to be the 'Fuhrer Area'. Hitler himself only owned the Berghof and all costs in his area were charged to him. Large barracks were erected to accommodate countless labourers. The steep road leading from Berchtesgaden up to the Obersalzberg was widened and a new road constructed to Oberau.

The work began by reconstructing the Berghof which received another floor, and wide steps were constructed leading up to the front of the building. A 'Gothic' type hall with heavy marble pillars formed the lobby to the famous conference room, where the large picture window gave a beautiful view of the Untersberg mountain. In addition the ground floor contained the hall, vestibule, dining room, guard room, a day room for the staff, a large kitchen, two rooms for adjutants, and an outdoor terrace. Hitler's living room, bedroom, study and rooms for his permanent bodyguard occupied the first floor with the second floor for more personal guests. Other official visitors were accommodated in local pensions and hotels. The garage was situated below the ground floor immediately beneath the picture window—when this was lowered, visitors have recorded that petrol fumes could be smelt in the conference room. This room was also used for film shows. Store rooms, the heating system and bowling alley were all below ground. It was in these store rooms that Hitler kept the many gifts he received. Reconstructions and alterations to the Berghof continued even during the latter years of the war, when building materials were in short supply.

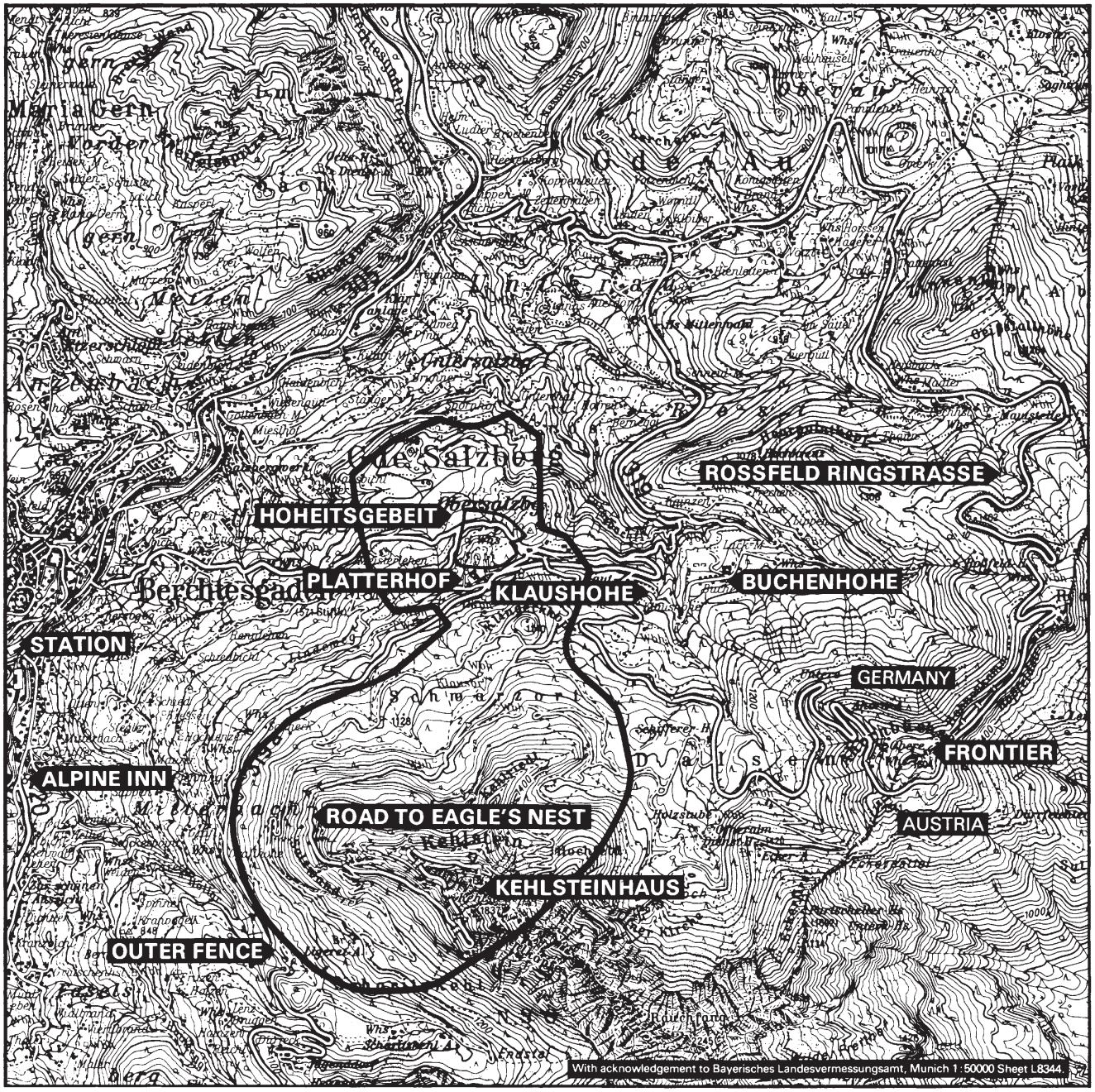
Above: A group beside the fireplace. Hitler's chair is to the immediate right of the fire; Bormann would sit on the opposite side and Eva Braun in the check-cloth easy chair nearest the camera (Hoffmann). Below: Obersalzberg had been captured and these GIs examine the fireplace; the editor wonders if they knew they were standing exactly where Hitler sat (Keystone).

The whole 'Fuhrer' area, surrounded by a seven-foot fence, was divided into two parts. The inner circle was the Hoheitsgebiet, which contained the Berghof and Martin Bormann's house which the latter had taken over from Dr. Seitz, renovated and converted into his private home. This inner area was guarded by SS sentries, the SS barracks being located nearby.

The outer perimeter was guarded initially by civilian police, later replaced by the Reichssicherheitsdienst State Security Service. Passes had to be shown on entering the Fuhrer area, one of Bormann's instructions being that 'a uniform is no authorisation to pass these gates'. Stone sentry buildings were erected at the entrances to the Hoheitsgebiet.

Hitler insisted that all the various constructions should not affect the natural balance of the area; it seems he was quite an environmental enthusiast! Trees, game and birds were to be preserved, cages and feeding places were established and regular feeding took place during the winter months, and all hunting was prohibited. Two elaborate greenhouses were constructed with a mushroom farm beneath, and Bormann had a hundred bee-hives on his land.

The Berghof showing the large window which could be lowered and the garage beneath it; today the garage is all that remains of Hitler's house at Obersalzberg (Ammon).



Above: The interior of the garage today looking towards the entrance. After thirty years of looting we found what must be the last relic left; the huge lockplate in the left foreground from the door. Below left: The exterior of the garage, the roof of which formed the Berghof terrace. Below right: Top right hand corner of the doorway; compare with the picture on the opposite page. Bottom: Even the plaster had been stripped from the walls and rubble littered the floor when we took our picture in March 1975.

Hitler's visitors

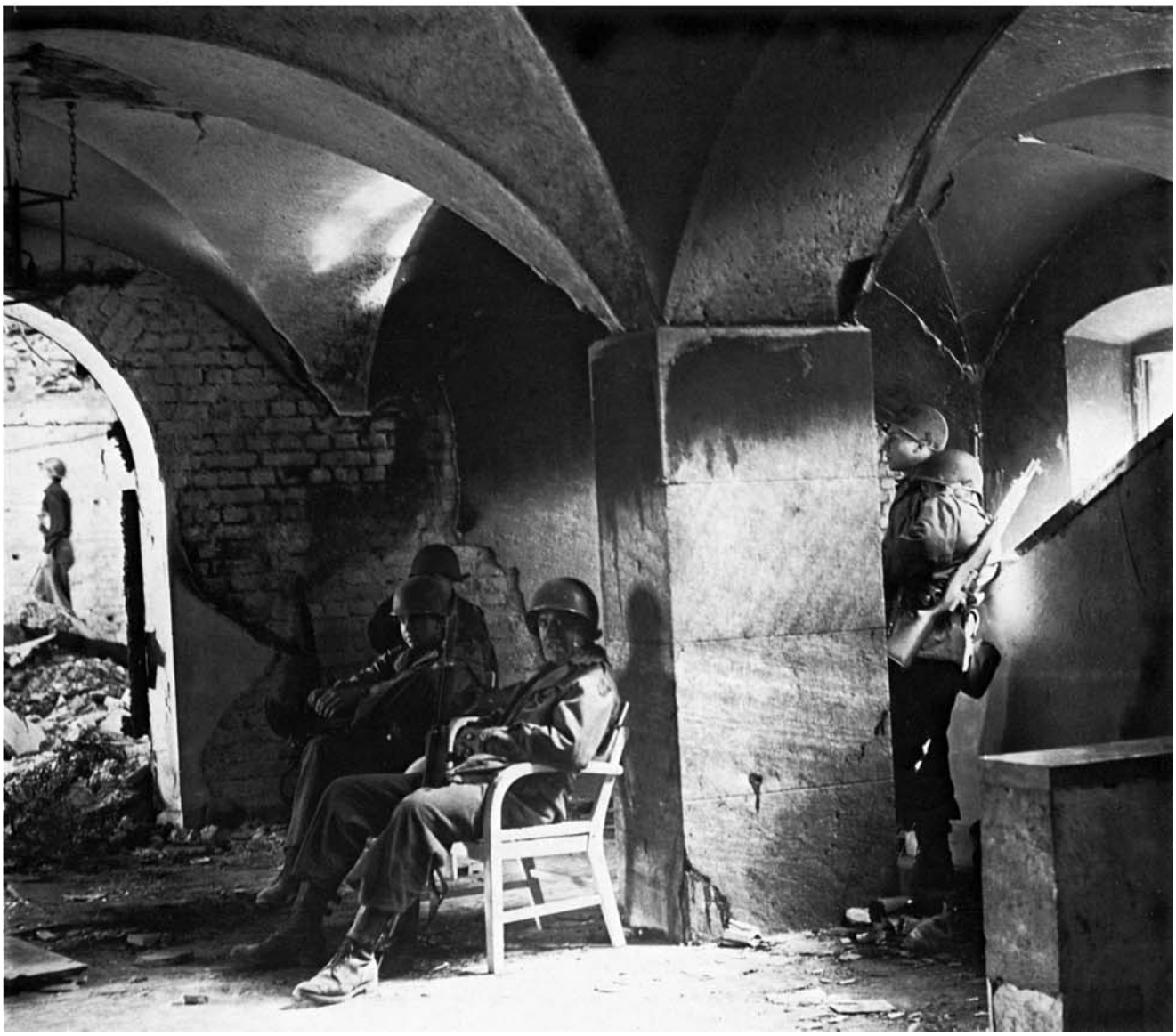
One of Hitler's favourite places in the area had been the Platterhof Pension. It was the Platterhof that he ordered to be reconstructed into a national hotel; every German who pilgrimaged to see their beloved Fuhrer could stay one night for RM1! This was Hitler's way of expressing his enormous enjoyment of the visitors who flocked to Berchtesgaden—an average of five thousand daily in the early days. The old Platterhof was demolished in the summer of 1938. However, once under the influence of Bormann, Hitler's modest plans were discarded. By the time it was completed, paintings, heavy rugs, gold fittings, a barber's shop and beauty parlour selling RM300 perfume, had transformed the 150-room hotel into accommodation within the means of only the topmost Nazi personnel. The road to Scharitzkehlalm was enlarged, giving winter access. Also, a mountain scenic road was begun through Rossfeld and Eckersattel, running for part of its length through Austria.

Some of Hitler's young admirers: Left: Hitler meets the frauleins (Fox). Above: A little girl, Berneli, was a frequent visitor (Hoffmann). Below: A young member of the Hitler Jugend (Bundesarchiv). All the pictures were taken in the driveway. Opposite top: The driveway is easily distinguished today with the tarmac in a surprisingly good state of repair considering the long absence of the owner!

Above: The old Platterhof pension which had long been in existence on Obersalzberg. Below, as it appeared after the Bormann rebuilding in 1938. Note the guest house on the left; the building in the right foreground is the post office (Berta Geiss). Above: The Platterhof now in the guise of the General Walker Hotel used as a recreation centre for US military personnel (Plenk).

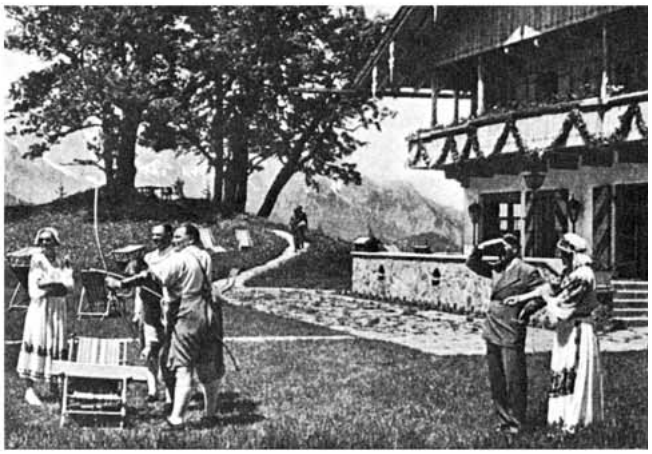
Distinguished British visitors during the pre-war period photographed on the steps of the Berghof were: Above, in September 1936, David Lloyd George, Leader of the Liberal Party (Hoffmann); below, the Duke of Windsor and his wife on October 23, 1937, nearly a year after he had abdicated the throne of England (Hoffmann) and above right, Neville Chamberlain, British Prime Minister on his visit to see Hitler on September 15, 1938. The picture was taken at 4 p.m. — Chamberlain was following Schuschnigg's steps, seven months previous, to Hitler's first floor study (Ullstein).

Above: The staircase to the first floor (Illustrated London News). Below: In Hitler's eyes—unwelcome visitors! GIs relax at the foot of the stairs on chairs taken from the terrace (Keystone). Right: By December 1949 the stairs, handrail, and even plaster had been stripped by souvenir hunters. Here tourists climb up planks to see the bedrooms of Hitler and Eva Braun (Associated Press).

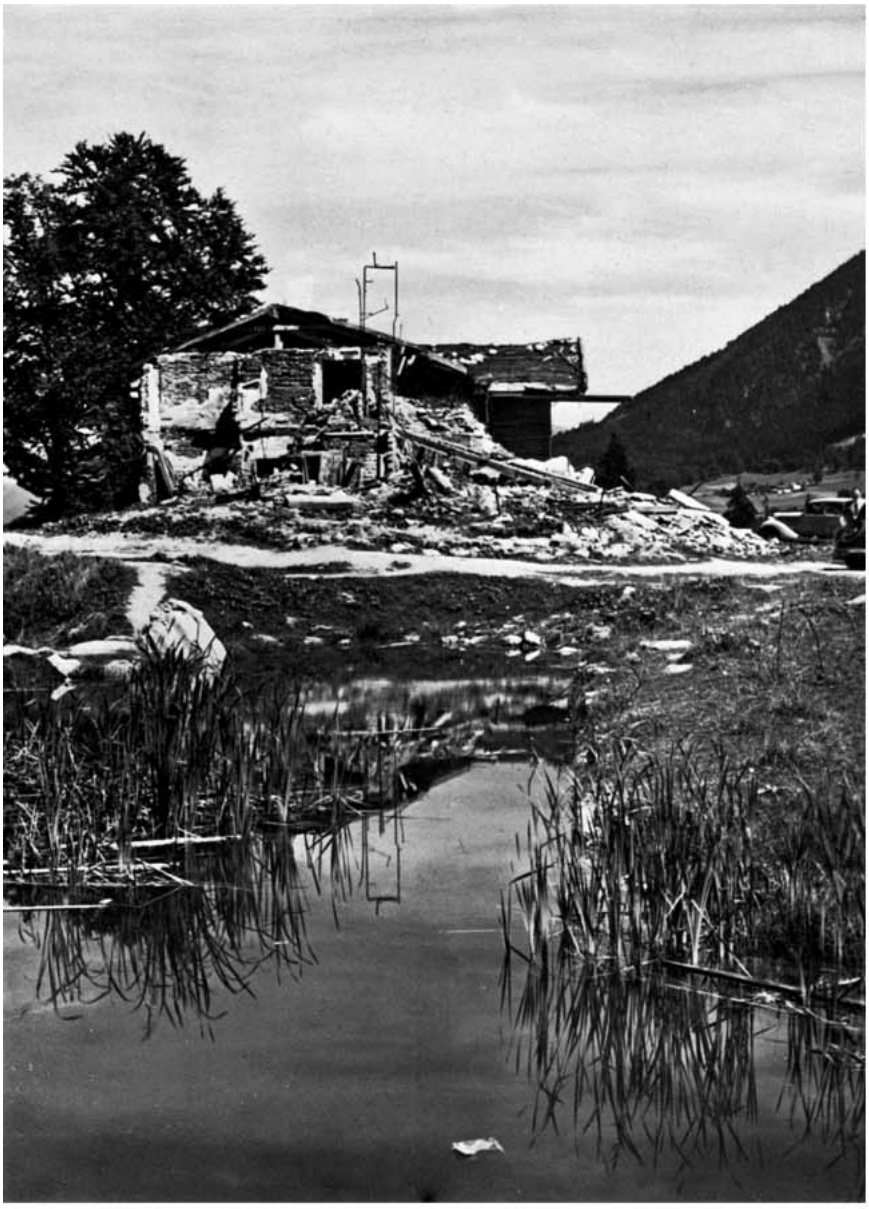


Landhaus Goring

Hermann Goring owned a small lodge in the area above the Berghof prior to 1933. Hitler gave him permission to enlarge this but Goring, unlike Bormann, made sure that he did not surpass the grandeur of the Berghof. Light, tinted, polished ceilings with mosaics inlaid with flowers, leaves, butterflies and birds were his taste. A swimming pool was constructed in front of the house. A further reconstruction took place in 1941 costing RM350,000 for labour alone. Goring often stayed at his Obersalzberg residence, if only for a few days in between official duties. Frau Goring, however, spent several months there at a time, but, we are told, keeping herself to herself and not mixing with the Bormann family or Eva Braun. Goring's visits would not be heralded by the closure of roads, as were Hitler's, and he would arrive accompanied only by his driver, or a small escort.

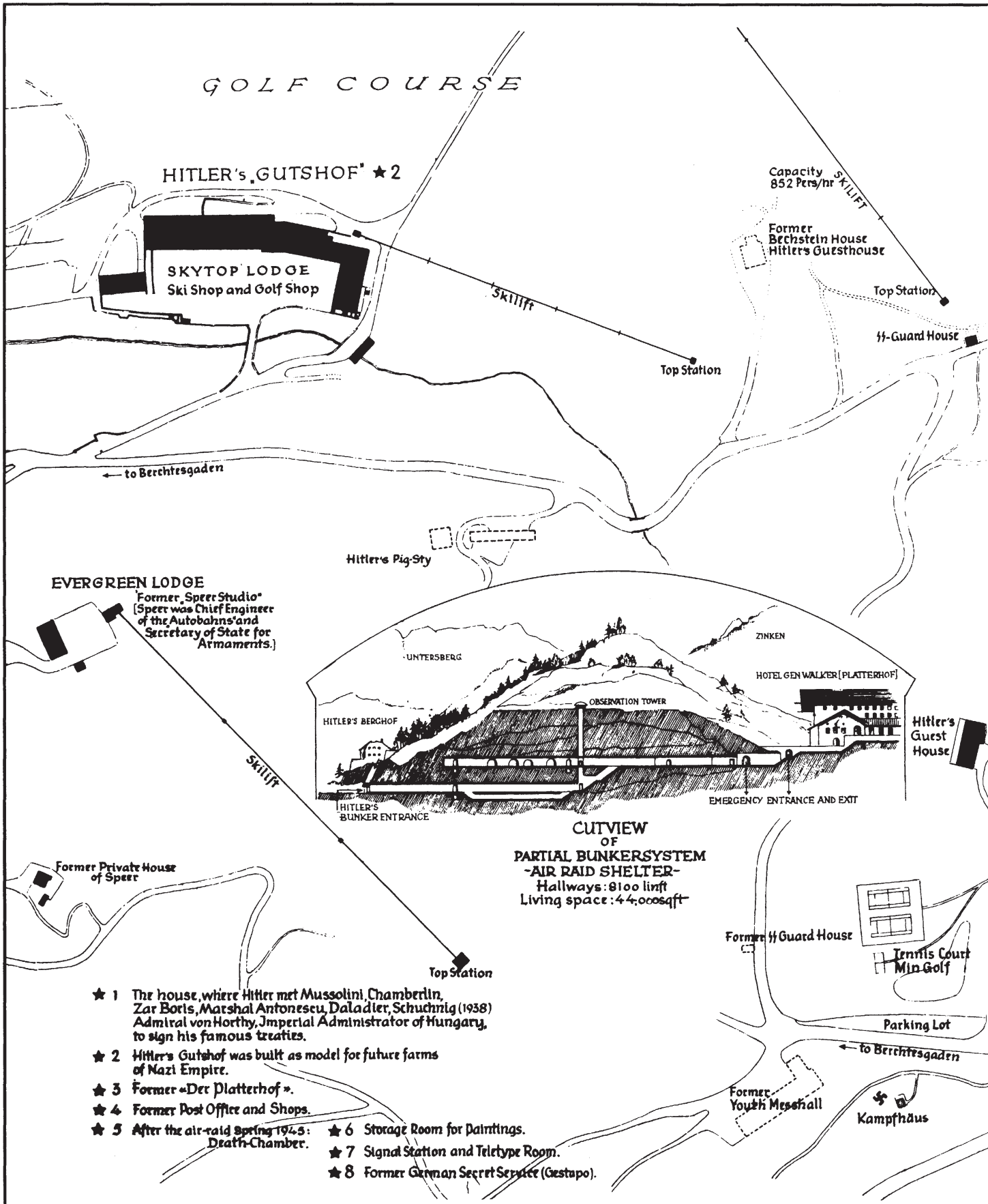


Top right: Goring's house pictured before 1933. The swimming pool is out of the picture to the left (Ammon). Above left: The alterations taking place; a tourist's snapshot taken on March 20, 1941 (Berta Geiss). Above right: Hitler, on the right, visits the Goring household. Goring is standing on the left (Berta Geiss). Below: Three weeks after the Americans captured Obersalzberg, German prisoners-of-war were pictured clearing up the wreckage from the bombed house (Keystone).

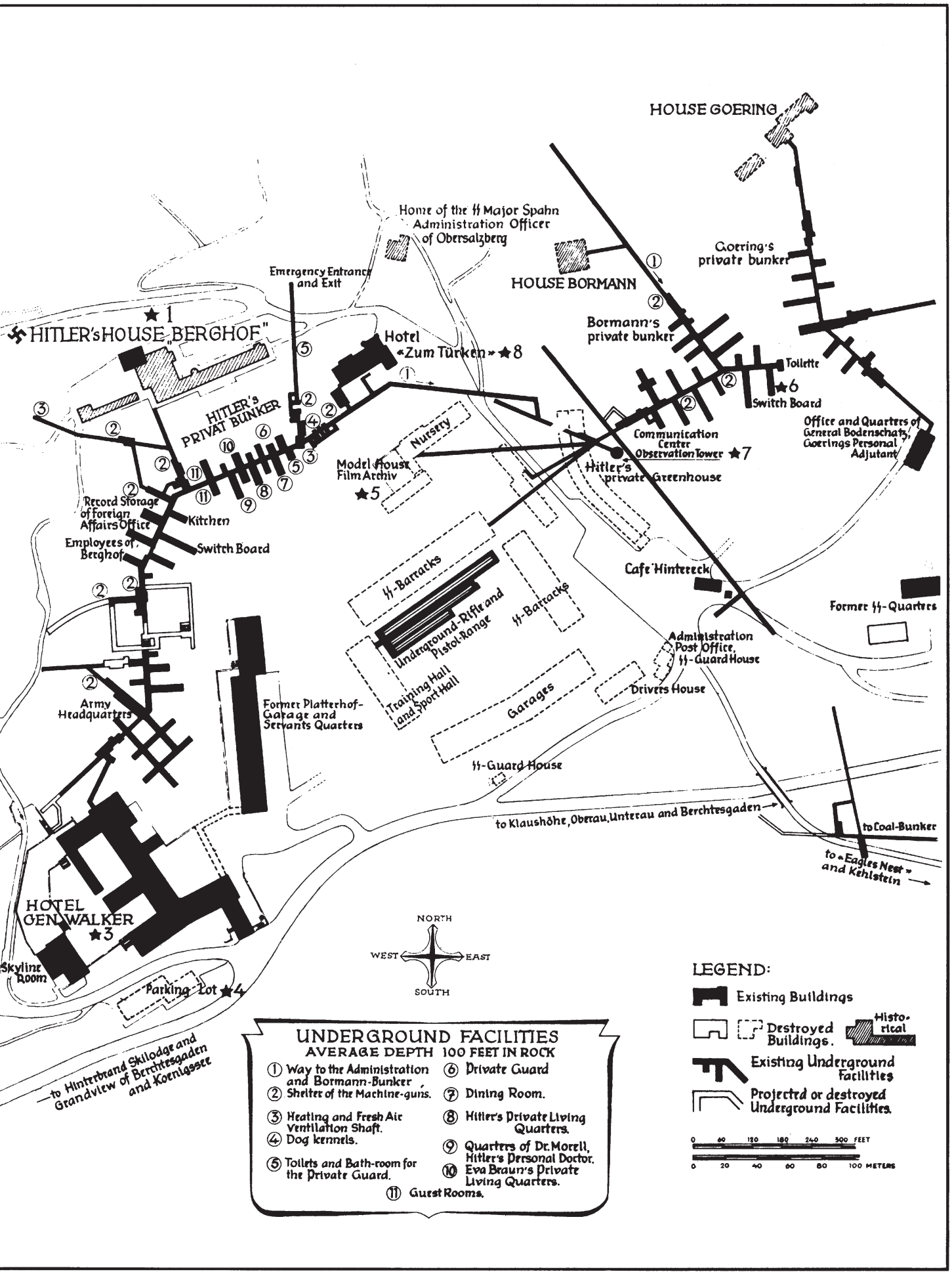


Above: One hundred and fifty feet underground in Goring's bunker before it was sealed up (Zeitz). Below: The blocked up entrance today.

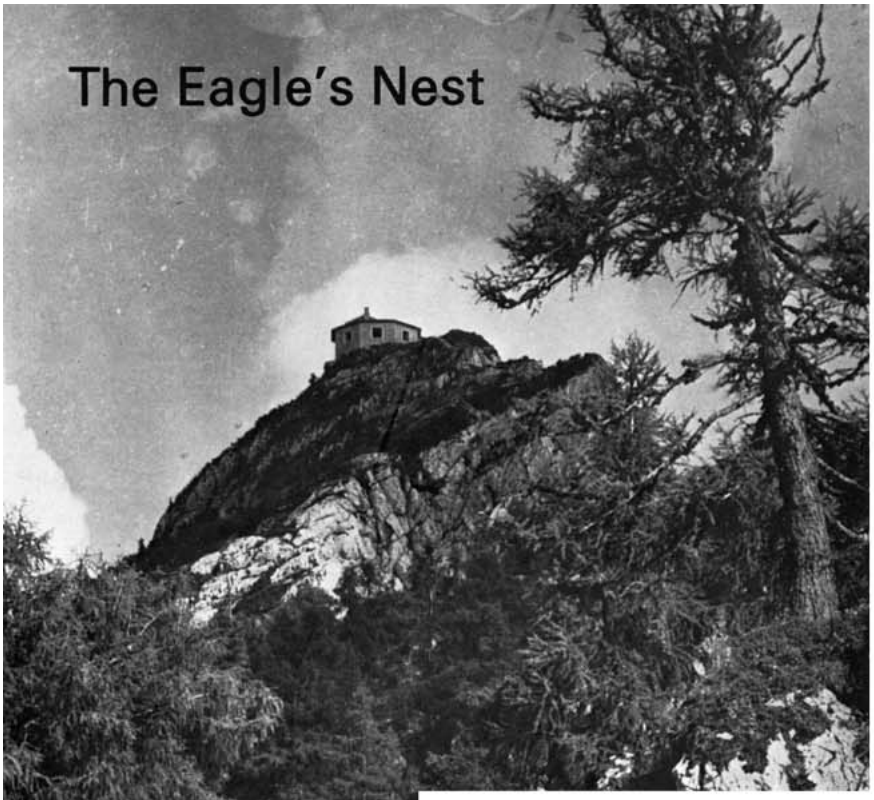
Left: With reeds growing in the swimming pool, the ruin was left to the tourists until 1952 when it was razed to the ground together with the other Nazi buildings in the area (Zeitz). Below: the site of the house in 1974; compare with the picture of Hitler visiting Goring opposite.


GOLF COURSE
HITLER's „GUTSHOF" ★2
SKYTOP LODGE
Ski Shop and Golf Shop
Skilift
Top Station
Capacity 852 Pers/hr
Former Bechstein House Hitler's Guesthouse
Top Station
SS-Guard House
to Berchtesgaden
Hitler's Pig-Sty
EVERGREEN LODGE
"Former „Speer Studio"
[Speer was Chief Engineer of the Autobahns and Secretary of State for Armaments.]
UNTERSBERG
ZINKEN
HOTEL GEN WALKER [PLATTERHOF]
OBSERVATION TOWER
HITLER'S BERGHOF
Hitler's Guest House
HITLER'S BUNKER ENTRANCE
EMERGENCY ENTRANCE AND EXIT
CUTVIEW OF PARTIAL BUNKERSYSTEM -AIR RAID SHELTER-
Hallways: 8100 linft
Living space: 44,000sqft
Skilift
Former Private House of Speer
Top Station
Former SS Guard House
Tennis Court
Min Golf
Parking Lot
to Berchtesgaden
Former Youth Messhall
Kampfhaus
★ 1 The house, where Hitler met Mussolini, Chamberlin, Zar Boris, Marshal Antonescu, Daladier, Schuchnig (1938) Admiral von Horthy, Imperial Administrator of Hungary, to sign his famous treaties.
★ 2 Hitler's Gutshof was built as model for future farms of Nazi Empire.
★ 3 Former «Der Platterhof».
★ 4 Former Post Office and Shops.
★ 5 After the air-raid Spring 1945: Death-Chamber.
★ 6 Storage Room for Paintings.
★ 7 Signal Station and Teletype Room.
★ 8 Former German Secret Service (Gestapo).

Obersalzberg, Hitler's residential area from 1923 to 1945. Map, illustrating original and present day layout and use, drawn by E. Wille from information gathered by the US Engineer Section, Berchtesgaden Recreation Area, March 1964.


HOUSE GOERING
Home of the SS Major Spahn Administration Officer of Obersalzberg
Goering's private bunker
HOUSE BORMANN
Emergency Entrance and Exit
★1
"HITLER'S HOUSE BERGHOF"
Bormann's private bunker
Hotel «Zum Türken» ★8
Toilette
★6
Switch Board
HITLER'S PRIVAT BUNKER
Office and Quarters of General Bodenschatz, Goerings Personal Adjutant
Nursery
Communication Center Observation Tower ★7
Model House Film Archiv ★5
Hitler's private Greenhouse
Record Storage of foreign Affairs Office
Kitchen
Employees of Berghof
Switch Board
SS-Barracks
Underground-Rifle and Pistol-Range
SS-Barracks
Cafe Hintereck
Former SS-Quarters
Administration Post Office, SS-Guard House
Training Hall and Sport Hall
Garages
Drivers House
Army Headquarters
Former Platterhof-Garage and Servants Quarters
SS-Guard House
to Klaushöhe, Oberau, Unterau and Berchtesgaden
to Coal-Bunker
to «Eagles Nest» and Kehlstein
HOTEL GEN. WALKER ★3
Skyline Room
Parking Lot ★4
to Hinterbrand Skilodge and Grandview of Berchtesgaden and Koenigssee
NORTH
WEST
EAST
SOUTH
LEGEND:
Existing Buildings
Destroyed Buildings.
Histo-rical
Existing Underground Facilities
Projected or destroyed Underground Facilities.
0 60 120 180 240 300 FEET
0 20 40 60 80 100 METERS
UNDERGROUND FACILITIES
AVERAGE DEPTH 100 FEET IN ROCK
① Way to the Administration and Bormann-Bunker
② Shelter of the Machine-guns.
③ Heating and Fresh Air Ventilation Shaft.
④ Dog kennels.
⑤ Toilets and Bath-room for the Private Guard.
⑥ Private Guard
⑦ Dining Room.
⑧ Hitler's Private Living Quarters.
⑨ Quarters of Dr. Morell, Hitler's Personal Doctor.
⑩ Eva Braun's Private Living Quarters.
⑪ Guest Rooms.

The Eagle's Nest



Left: The Eagle's Nest perched above the road blasted out of rock (Associated Press). Top: The entrance guarded by GIs in 1945 and above, open to tourists.

Of the other constructions in the area, the Tea House on Kehlstein mountain is probably the most legendary and the most well known. This was begun as soon as work was finished on the alterations to the Berghof and Bormann's house. The Tea House was Bormann's idea and he was able to influence Hitler to approve construction of the building. It has been surmised that possibly Bormann wanted an isolated place where his meetings with Hitler would be less disturbed than at the Berghof, or that he wanted to give it as a present to Hitler to raise his own standing, or he felt it would impress foreign diplomats and visitors.

Whatever the reason, the project was a major engineering feat. A road had to be blasted out of virgin rock This asphalt road, nearly four miles long, was to wind up through several long tunnels and hairpin bends to a parking area beneath the peak of the Kehlstein mountain. From here a ten-foot high tunnel was to run 150 yards into the mountain. From there a visitor would take a lift 350 feet up to the interior of the Tea House. When completed, the cost, including the independent generator, hot air heating system, copper and bronze doors and lift with brass fittings, was RM30million. The Tea House itself consisted of a dining room, study, lounge, kitchen, guard room, rest room, washrooms and a large basement. All the rooms were lined with stone or pine. Cararic marble was used in the lounge, with a fireplace with bronze tiles.

Hitler only visited the Tea House five times, and it was used more by Bormann, who spent his Sundays there and also entertained a few foreign visitors.

Photo opposite page: Hitler and Eva Braun in the Eagle's Nest — a National Archives seized photograph. Above: Soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division relax in the original furnishings. Eva Braun was sitting in the chair at the side of the left hand window (USAF). Below: The same room open to the public today as a restaurant (Baumann).

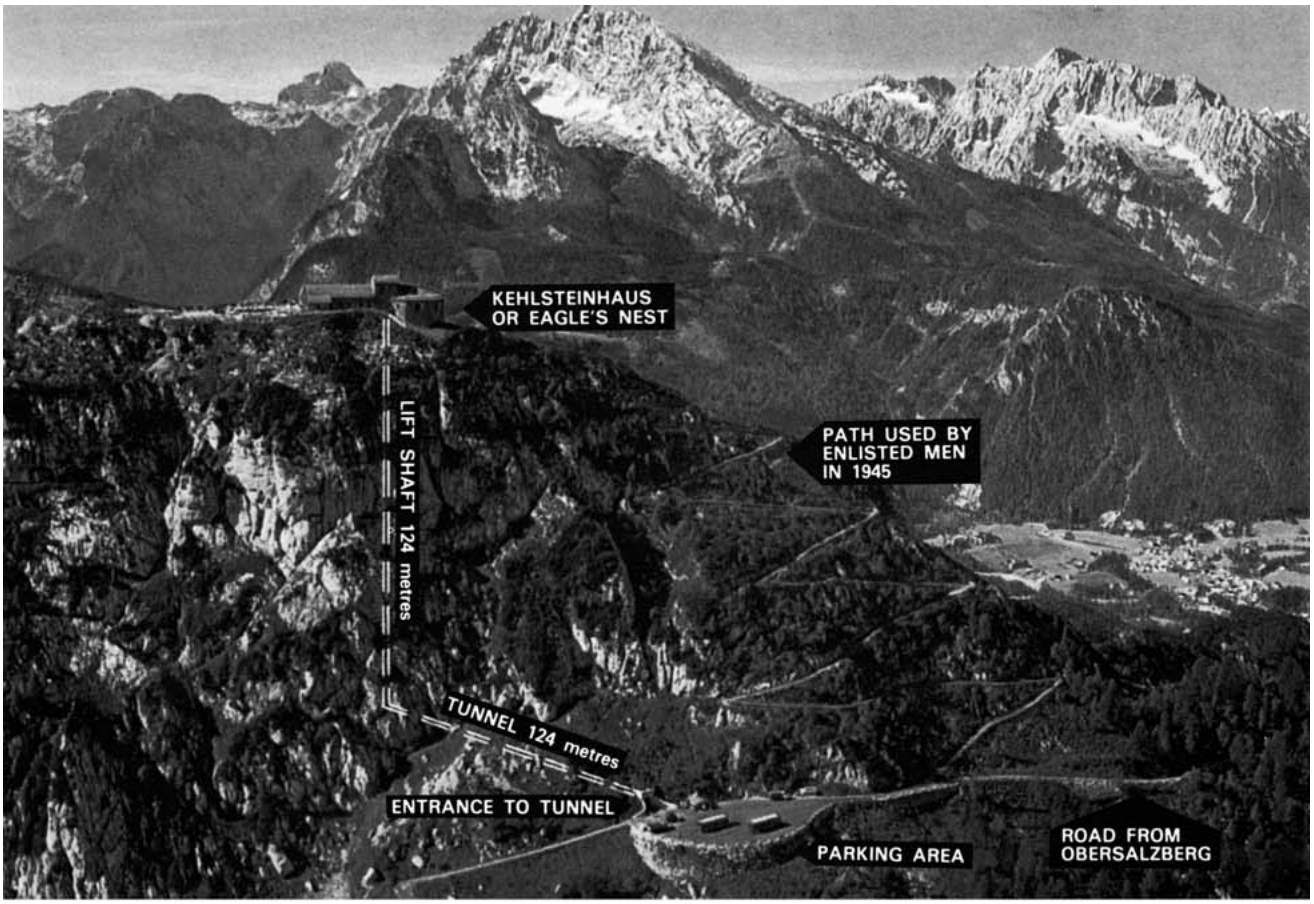


Diagram of the lift shaft and, on the right, the footpath used by enlisted men in 1945 to reach the top (Ammon).

Left: The Eagle's Nest when captured in 1945 (Berta Geiss). Above: Now called the Kehlsteinhaus, visitors can admire the view from the enlarged forecourt (Ammon).

Left: GIs take it easy beside a warm fire in 1945. Even the knick-knacks on the mantleshelf are intact (Keystone). Above: Today it is virtually unchanged except for the furnishings—one wonders what happened to them? (Baumann).

Many other building projects were carried out on Obersalzberg, amongst them a 2,000-seat cinema for construction workers near the large camp at Antenberg, half a mile west of the Platterhof. Performances were held three times a week with no charge for admission. Propaganda speeches were given about every two months by Party officials or war heroes which, it seems, were not very popular with the workers. Even Hitler received a cool reception when he gave a speech there in 1937 after the completion of the SS Barracks.

Two housing estates were started at Klaushoehe and Buchenhoehe as a means of colonising the Obersalzberg with faithful personnel. Klaushoehe consisted of four rows each of eight houses, with a large parking area nearby. Buchenhoehe, on the other hand, was to be more elaborate with forty blocks of flats, each block consisting of four flats of five to eight rooms with a central heating system and, in addition, a school, gymnasium, garage, and swimming pool.

When Allied air raids over Germany became increasingly more severe, air defence shelters, bunkers and the safety of the Fuhrer became the main consideration at Obersalzberg. Plans were drawn up, modified and finally approved for the construction of an extensive system of interconnecting tunnels beneath the buildings at Obersalzberg. With a mixed labour force of Czechs, Italians and an SS tunnel construction company, the first bunker was started, beginning at the Berghof. The completion of part of this tunnel was scheduled for December 24, 1943 when Hitler was expected to go to Obersalzberg for Christmas. After the delayed start, only eight weeks were left for completion, but despite this, a four hundred foot tunnel with adjacent rooms, including polished inlaid flooring and wainscoting, were completed within the time limit. Originally the tunnels were planned to be simply air-raid shelters, but security demanded underground machine-gun posts, Bormann demanded lavish embellishments, including air conditioning, and Eva Braun desired her own bathroom. By the time everyone else had stated what they wanted, nearly two miles of tunnel had to be constructed!

Bormann naturally had his own tunnel for himself and family, as did Goring who had already begun his own shelter in 1941. When Goring requested that his tunnel be connected with Bormann's, the latter refused and both tunnels remained separated by thirty feet of rock.

This, then, was the Obersalzberg—to the Germans the legendary retreat of their Fuhrer—to the Allies advancing across Europe an impregnable stronghold, part of the mythical National Redoubt which was expected to be defended to the last man.

Above: Machine gun ports defending the entrance to the bunker system from the 'Gasthof zum Tuerken'; Gestapo H.Q.

Above: Situated next to the Berghof, the 'Gasthof zum Tuerken' built in 1911 was commandeered from the Schuster family in 1933 and used by the RSD Criminal Police.

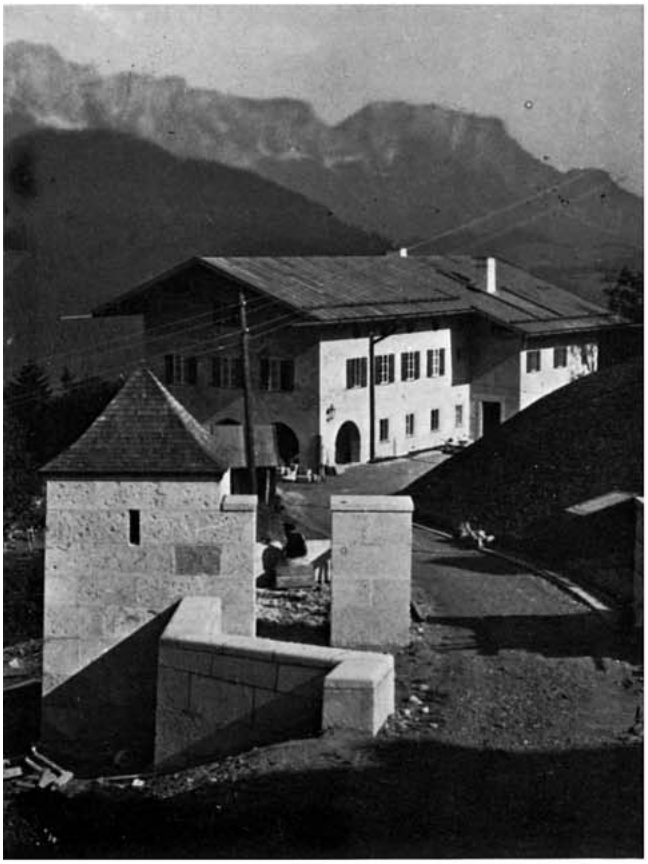
Above: The 'Tuerken' when captured in 1945, often described erroneously as Hitler's house due to incorrect captioning in 1945 (Keystone). Below: After the war the family purchased the ruins from the Bavarian Government and after its reconstruction, opened it as 'Gasthof zum Tuerken'.

Left: A bunker, situated opposite the 'Tuerken', described as containing 'strong boxes, safes and large quantities of arms and ammunition' is guarded by a GI (Keystone). Above: This is the same entrance today, concreted up.

Above: The sentry building, one of the two guarding the 'Hoheitsgebeit' or Fuhrer area. This one was situated just a hundred yards below the Berghof (Berta Geiss). Below: Our comparison taken in the spring of 1974; although the wooden superstructure has gone, the stone base can still be seen.

Above: This is how the bunker system looked in 1945 (Zeitz). Below: Underneath the 'Tuerken' we knock in vain at the bricked-up entrance to Hitler's bunker!

One of the two ruined buildings remaining on Obersalzberg today, the Platterhoff hotel garage: above, as it was in its heyday and right, today (Berta Geiss).



Left: The most impressive building to escape the demolitions of the 1950's was Hitler's guest house, pictured here just being completed. Mussolini stayed here. (Berta Geiss). Above: Off-limit signs are a weak deterrent to the After the Battle team! Below: All that remains of the other sentry house.

Left and above: Perhaps significantly, bearing in mind his enthusiasm for the Obersalzberg projects, least of all remains today of Bormann's house. Even the ground was excavated to provide earth for the nearby car park.

Wednesday, April 25, 1945

On Wednesday, April 25, 1945, 617 Squadron mounted a Lancaster raid on the area. The alert was sounded on the mountain at 9.30 a.m. and by the time the attack started at 10.00 a.m., all the workers and inhabitants were safely in the air raid shelters which now had iron doors, blast walls and gas locks.

The first 1,000-lb bombs fell on the housing settlements at Buchenhoehe and Klaushoehe, destroying houses and damaging roads. Half an hour later, the second wave attacked the Berghof area with Tallboy bombs. The bombing lasted for an hour; 617 Squadron thought the attack was not very successful as the targets were covered in snow merging with the low cloud. However, at the end of it, the Berghof had one side completely destroyed; the Goring and Bormann houses were badly damaged as were the SS barracks and the Platterhof. The cinema and workers' camp at Antenberg had also been hit and the whole area heavily cratered. The loss of life was very slight, only six people killed out of 3,500 sheltering in the rock tunnels.

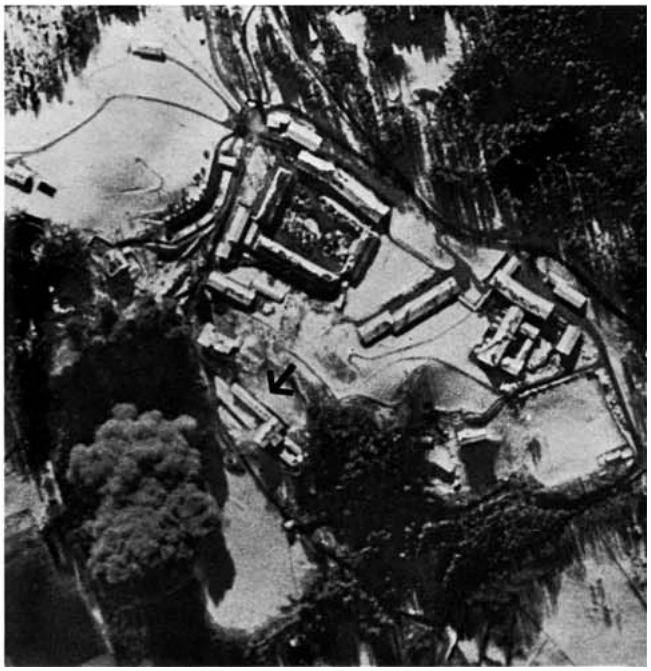
On the day previous to the RAF raid, April 24, Goring had been arrested on the orders of Bormann for his 'treacherous' telegram to Hitler in Berlin, and he was placed under house arrest in his Obersalzberg home. As we know, he survived the bombing and was taken with his family to Austria by the SS.

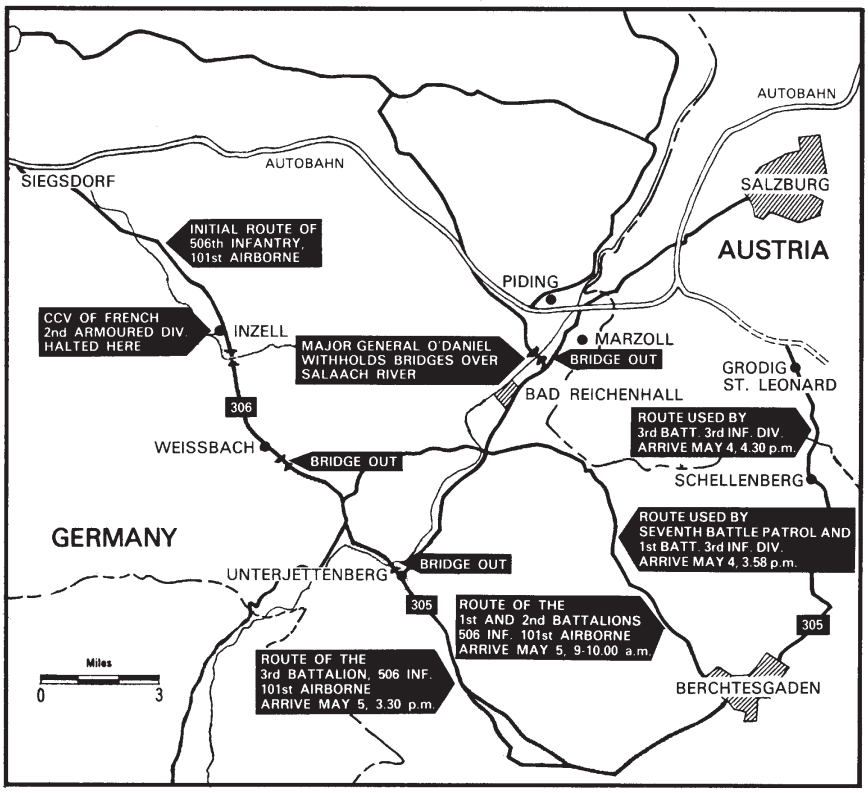
The Obersalzberg SS commander had already told the Berchtesgaden town authorities that they did not intend to defend the area. The SS withdrew south together with the administration of the building projects, leaving behind a debt of RM17 million which was owed to the construction firms and labourers.

On the mountain itself, the situation was chaotic; with the tunnel entrances and buildings unguarded, people began looting the huge quantities of food, clothes and goods stored there. Some form of order was restored by Herr Georg Grethlein, head of the largest construction firm on the mountain, Labor Association Philipp Holzmann, Held & Franke, with the help of some of his four hundred-odd employees. On Friday, May 4, those SS troops left poured petrol into the Berghof and set it on fire.

Meanwhile, American forces were racing across Southern Germany, where the capture of the prize of Hitler's mountain sanctuary parallelled that of Berlin in the North.

Above: Lancasters of 617 Squadron fly over Walchensee en route for Obersalzberg on April 25, 1945 (IWM). Below: Reconnaissance pictures taken before (left), and during the raid (right). The area shown is the complete Hoheitsgebeit. The Berghof is arrowed (IWM).





The 101st pipped at the post!

The capture of Berchtesgaden was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division, in particular the 506th Regiment. In fact, everyone was in on the race, including the 3rd US Infantry Division and the French 2nd Armoured Division as the following account from the 101st Divisional History recounts:

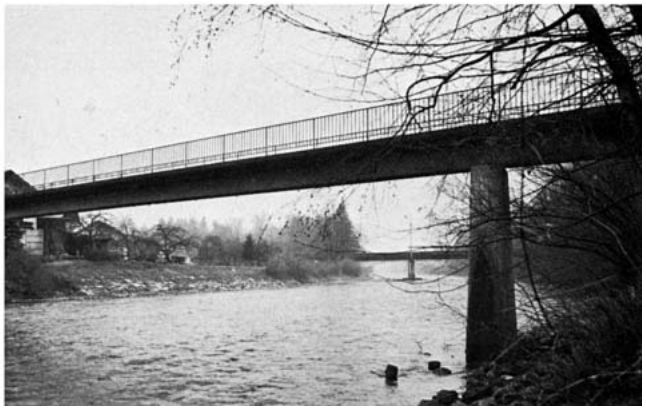
The mission, as assigned, was for the 506th to capture Berchtesgaden. It was believed to be full of big-shot Nazis, souvenirs, and not too well defended. Therefore there was more than the usual expectancy among Colonel Sink's paratroopers when, on the night of the 3rd, the orders came to take on extra ammunition and rations and move out by truck at 0600 the next morning along the Salzburg Autobahn to the town containing Hitler's home and Eagle's Nest.

Early on the 4th the 506th, accompanied by Battery A of the 321st FA Battalion and the 1st Platoon of Battery A, 81st AA Battalion, and with four of the new recoilless 75mm rifles from the 377th Battalion took off east over the splendid Munich-Salzburg Autobahn. They crossed the Inn River near Rosenheim, skirted the beautiful Chiem-See, and finally reached the crossroads at Siegsdorf, fifty miles from Miesbach. Here they turned right on the most direct route to Berchtesgaden. About eight or nine miles down the road at the village of Inzell they ran into the tail of a column of stalled tanks from Combat Command V of the French 2nd Armoured Division, the first division to enter Paris. With the tanks was the Division's famed commander, General Jacques Philippe LeClerc. A look up the road told the story—the Germans had blown a bridge over one of the deep ravines and the French had no bridging material. Fortunately, the 506th had plenty of Bailey bridge units and began constructing a crossing. This was not as simple a process as it might have been, for on the far side and high up in the snow the Germans had set up .50-calibre and possibly 20mm guns and were laying plunging fire on the bridge builders. So the paratroopers had to climb down the steep sides of the ravine, cross the mountain creek, and climb hundreds of feet upward to take care of diehard defenders.

Since it was going to take some time to get across the gap and there was reason to believe that other bridges further along the road were also out, Colonel Sink decided to divide his regiment and send one battalion, the 2nd, back up to the Autobahn, east on that highway to the turn-off to Bad Reichenhall, and then through Bad Reichenhall and by that back way into Berchtesgaden. Colonel Strayer about-faced his battalion, headed back to the Autobahn, and was proceeding uneventfully down it until he came to a blown bridge over the Saalach river. This was not a serious roadblock because there was a by-pass along a dirt road through the 3rd Division area. At the head of this road, though, was a block in the person of the 3rd Division's commander, Major-General John W. O'Daniel, which no bridging material could cross. There just weren't enough roads that day; a message received by XXI Corps offered the explanation: 'Everybody and his brother are trying to get into the town'.

Above: Major-General John W. 'Iron Mike' O'Daniel who stole Berchtesgaden for the US Third Division. He died in April 1975 as we were taking our final pictures for this story. Below: The bridge over a ravine just to the south of Weissbach, on the 306 road to Berchtesgaden which the 101st Division found blown.

Third Infantry Division steals Berchtesgaden



Top. The main road south from the autobahn where it crosses the Saalach river. This bridge (which the cars are crossing) was blown; our Land-Rover is on the dirt road turn-off. Above left: The dirt road leading to the river. Above: The two bridges held by O'Daniel; in the background the original railway bridge; in the foreground a replacement to the small wooden bridge which was swept away by high water in early 1950's.

Major-General John W. 'Iron Mike' O'Daniel, Commanding General of the Third Infantry Division, had tried unsuccessfully to get Berchtesgaden as an objective for his division. However, he decided not to let slip from his fingers the golden opportunity of adding the Bavarian mountain town, made famous by Hitler's hideaway, to the long list of towns and cities captured by the 'Rock of the Marne' Division. He then ordered Colonel John A. Heintges to drive the 7th Infantry, the 'Cotton Baler' Regiment, with all possible speed and to capture Berchtesgaden.

Early in the morning of May 4 reconnaissance discovered that a railway bridge over the Saalach near Piding had a locomotive engine on it. A small wooden bridge was also discovered nearby which was undamaged and strong enough to permit passage of foot troops and jeeps.

With its Second Battalion already across the river into Austria and in possession of much of Salzburg and by a stroke of luck in possession of two bridges, the Seventh Infantry was in a most favourable position to swoop down on Berchtesgaden and capture Hitler's hideaway, the Berghof. No one realised this any sooner than the Third Division Commander. On the right the 101st Airborne Infantry Division and the Second French Armoured Division, which divisions had direct orders to seize Berchtesgaden, had not yet reached the Saalach.

Early that morning Major-General O'Daniel took matters into his own hands and decided to send the Seventh Infantry Regiment, out of the Third Infantry Division zone, to steal Berchtesgaden from the American paratroopers and French armoured forces, who technically were supposed to capture those places. Only Salzburg, Austria, had been definitely assigned to the Third Infantry Division but that place was in hand.

Colonel Heintges, who the night before had dreamed and hoped for that very opportunity and had conceived his 'Orange Plan' to put into execution should the chance occur, quickly issued his orders to push the First and Third Battalions over the bridges. The Commanding General, to assure himself of success, had ordered Colonel Heintges to place heavy guard on the two bridges and to permit no one, or any vehicle, to pass over them except Seventh Infantry personnel and vehicles. Accordingly guards commanded by First Lieutenant Nathan W. White and Second Lieutenant Robert Miller, liaison officers, were placed on the bridges. The Commanding General established a temporary command post for the Third Infantry Division on the far side of the Saalach river and made it known that he could be contacted if an occasion warranted it.

Skilled workers of Company A, 10th Combat Engineers, quickly removed the locomotive and repaired the railway bridge to permit passage of the artillery and attached armour. The First and Third Battalions meanwhile had passed all their foot troops and tactical vehicles over the small wooden bridge. First Battalion patrols soon entered Bad Reichenhall and at 9.30 a.m. that place was seized with 3,000 German troops held as prisoners of war. The Third Battalion troops captured Marzoll. With those places in hand Colonel Heintges gave Lieutenant Colonel Wallace and Major Flynn the go sign for Berchtesgaden.

The First Battalion was assigned the most direct route along the main highway from Bad Reichenhall but was preceded by elements of the Seventh Infantry Battle Patrol commanded by Second Lieutenant William Miller, Jr. The Battle Patrollers of the Seventh Infantry encountered no opposition and were the first Allied soldiers to enter Berchtesgaden at 3.58 p.m. on May 4. The Red Battalion troops soon followed and the town was seized with 2,000 enemy surrendering. The Third Battalion moving around from Marzoll to Grodig St. Leonard and Schellenberg entered the town from the north-east at 4.30 p.m. The Berghof was quickly found and a Nazi flag torn down from the pole nearby.

Meanwhile the French forces and the 101st Airborne Infantry Division had not been so fortunate in discovering bridges over the Saalach. They sought to use those held by the Seventh Infantry but failed, until the Commanding General had the word from the 'Cotton Baler' forces in Berchtesgaden that they had the place in hand. Once when the 3,000 German prisoners seized in Bad Reichenhall were being marched over the wooden bridge and on the way back to prisoner of war cages, a column of vehicles was seen moving rapidly towards the small wooden bridge. The leading vehicle, a jeep, carried the stars of a field general, who was standing up in the vehicle, with one hand on the windshield and the other waving frantically and most impatiently with a swagger stick for the prisoners of war to clear the road and make way for his column. Not desiring to get run down the German prisoners jumped aside and let the vehicles through. Obeying orders, the guard however blocked the road

A glum looking General LeClerc, seen here en route for Paris (US Army).

and stopped the French Second Armoured Division column. The French general, who was Major-General LeClerc, demanded an explanation from the officer in command of the guard. When told of the existing orders he asked of the whereabouts of the Commanding General, American Third Infantry Division, and when told demanded to be taken to him. Major-General O'Daniel was contacted and gave permission for the French general to pass over the bridge but all French troops were ordered to be held in place. The French general who was most displeased over the whole situation hurriedly passed to converse with the American general.

Unfortunately for posterity and history the conversation between the American and French generals was not recorded, but 'Iron Mike' who very early in life had learned the full meaning of the phrase 'possession is nine-tenths of the law', remained adamant and refused to budge. In an earlier war a Frenchman had said: 'They shall not pass'. On May 4 'Iron Mike' said somewhat the same thing but in different words and referred to French troops. Not until some time after the Commanding General had learned of the capture of Berchtesgaden by the Seventh Infantry did he allow the guards released. The French troops entered the town about four hours after the first 'Cotton Balers' had entered and found the Seventh Infantry in control.

Though the Seventh Infantry had captured Berchtesgaden the Commanding General had much to do with it, as it was his order that sent the 'Cotton Balers' on their way and prevented other elements from crossing the river until the objectives were captured. As a result of his order vehicles of the 101st Airborne and the French were jammed on the Reichsautobahn with no place to go until he chose to let them.

When General O'Daniel received the message of his regiment's entrance he lifted his ban, allowing the 101st to come over his road, and Colonel Strayer followed the 7th Regiment's route. The 1st Battalion of the 506th, still at the Inzell bridge, turned about and followed the 2nd Battalion down the Autobahn and through Bad Reichenhall to Berchtesgaden. This left Colonel Patch's 3rd Battalion to finish the bridge and move on to Berchtesgaden by the Regiment's original route. There were other bridges out and altogether the battalion had to construct three large bridges. They got into Berchtesgaden on the afternoon of the 5th.

On May 5 an important ceremony was held when the American flag was raised over the Berghof by the Seventh Infantry. At first the ceremony was delayed by French interference. The French troops had entered Berchtesgaden during the early evening of May 4, and were given a section of the town to occupy. Their section controlled the roads leading to the Obersalzberg on the outskirts of the town. Early on the 5th the French general, probably still smarting from the fact that his troops had been held up at the Saalach river bridges, had given orders to his command to block all entrances to the famous hideout. So when the Seventh Infantrymen went to hold their flag-raising ceremony there were unsuccessful attempts to prevent them from reaching the hideout which they had captured the day before. Just as the American flag was to be raised over the mountain hideout a French colonel appeared on the scene and attempted to prevent the ceremony because of the standing orders of his commanding general. His argument was that the Berghof was within the occupational zone assigned to the French the night before. After much discussion it was agreed to raise the American 'Stars and Stripes' and French 'Tricolor', together, up the pole which once flew the Nazi flag. A French flag was procured but it was such a large one that when the raising was first attempted it dragged on the ground. The French officer then withdrew his objections and the American flag alone was raised over the former mountain retreat.

It was in Berchtesgaden on May 6, while preparing to move south to the Bruck-Zell-am-See area that the 506th Regiment of the 101st Airborne received the following message:

Effective immediately all troops will stand fast on present positions. German Army Group G in this sector has surrendered. No firing on Germans unless fired upon. Notify French units in vicinity. Full details, to be broadcast, will be issued by SHAEF.

In the castle-square the Mayor, Herr Sandrock, officially surrendered Berchtesgaden to the Americans. Construction firm boss Georg Grethlein was appointed to help keep order

Above: Troopers of the 3rd Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101st at last on the move, pictured on May 5. They are on road 306 approaching the 305 turning to Berchtesgaden. They have a long walk; it is at least twelve miles away! (US Army) Below: Our comparison one snowy day in March 1975.

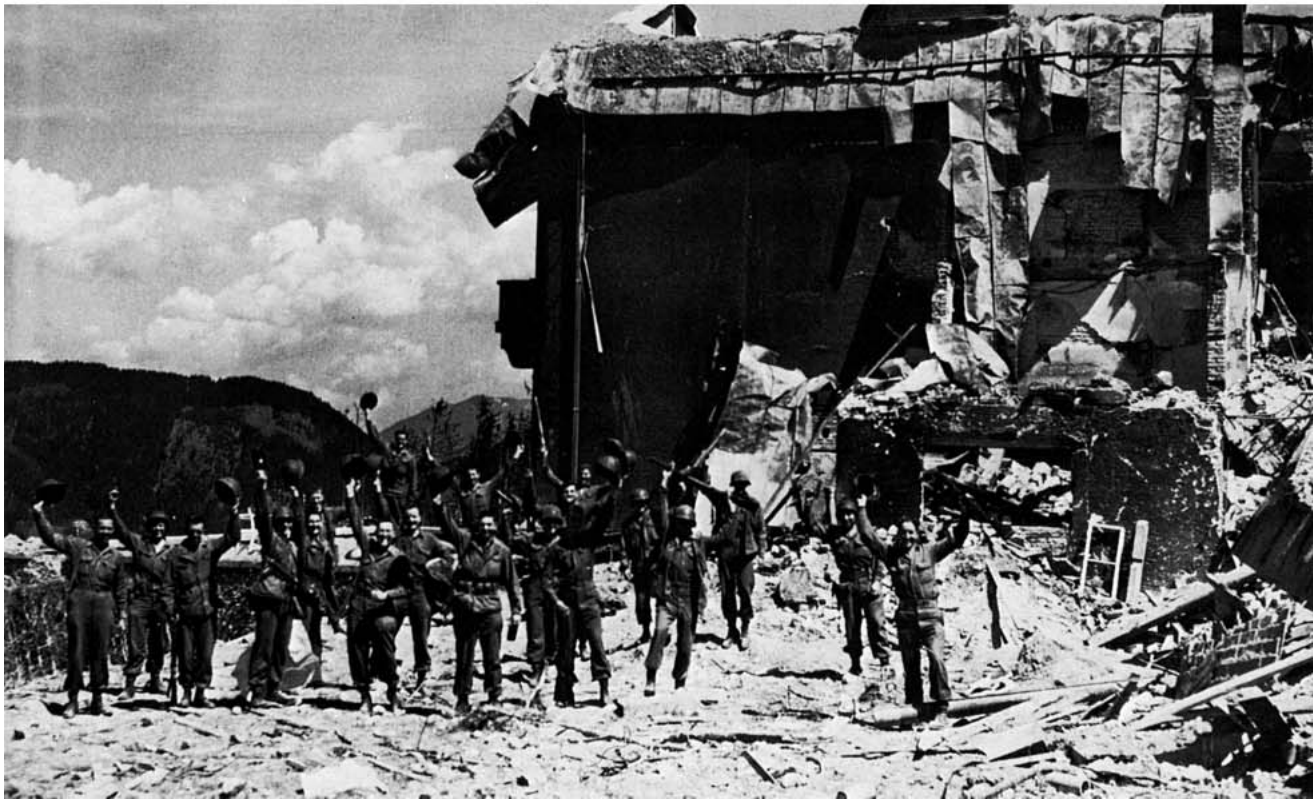
Right: This GI, most probably from O'Daniels 3rd Division, must have reached the Berghof quickly as it is still smouldering after being set on fire by SS troops (US Signal Corps). Above: A good comparison showing Hitler's garage.

and peace on Obersalzberg—a few hours later he was dead, shot in error together with his driver, Josef Lohr, by the occupation forces. They still lie together today—in the same grave in Berchtesgaden.

On May 6 the Seventh Infantry was ordered to remove its First and Third Battalions from Berchtesgaden and to assemble the entire regiment in Salzburg, Austria. Reluctantly the troops which had captured Berchtesgaden turned the whole place over to the 506th Parachute Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division and to French troops and repaired to Salzburg, their rightful zone.

The Berchtesgaden area had been a place of refuge for the Nazi leaders and the 101st had their share in bagging the bigwigs. Two of those Germans to go on trial at Nuremberg, Dr. Robert Ley and Julius Streicher, were taken by the 101st, and Feldmarschall Kesselring, found sitting in his train at Saalfelden in Austria, was returned to 101st custody at the Berchtesgaden Hof Hotel.

Below: The picture which says it all! American and French soldiers have reached their goal and together they cheer their victory, on the very ground where Hitler started it all (Keystone).



Top: The flag raising ceremony, actually held on high ground above Goring's home which can just be seen in the background. S/Sergeant Bennett Walters of Company L and Pfc. Nick Urick, Company A, prepare to raise 'Old Glory' (IWM). Above: Today, although not visible in our photograph, the stump of the pole still remains in the ground.

THE TELEPHONE EXCHANGE

The building illustrated on the right was the part of the Berghof used as the telephone exchange. Below we have printed a list of some of the Obersalzberg extensions.

BERGHOF

Kitchen	302	Adj. bedroom	401
Maids	304	Adjutant	402
Waiting room	305	Hall	414
Laundry	306	Eva Braun	417
Bowling alley	308	Dr. Morell	419
Garage	309	H. Hoffmann	426
Driver	337	Message centre	432
Duty Officer	344	Hitler's study	501
Cook	385	Hitler's bedroom	600
Surgeon	400	Dining room	606

BERGHOF BUNKER

Hall	365	Surgeon	490
Eva Braun	366	Kitchen	492
Guest room	379	Hitler's shelter	493
Air conditioning	411	Housekeeper	494
Bormann study	475	Hitler's bedroom	601
Guard	476	Hitler's study	603

KEHLSTEINHAUS

Lift	439	Schartizkehlroom	442
Bodyguard	440	Hitler's study	609

TEA HOUSE

Reception	437	Hall	444
Bodyguard	443	Cloakroom	445

BORMANN'S HOUSE

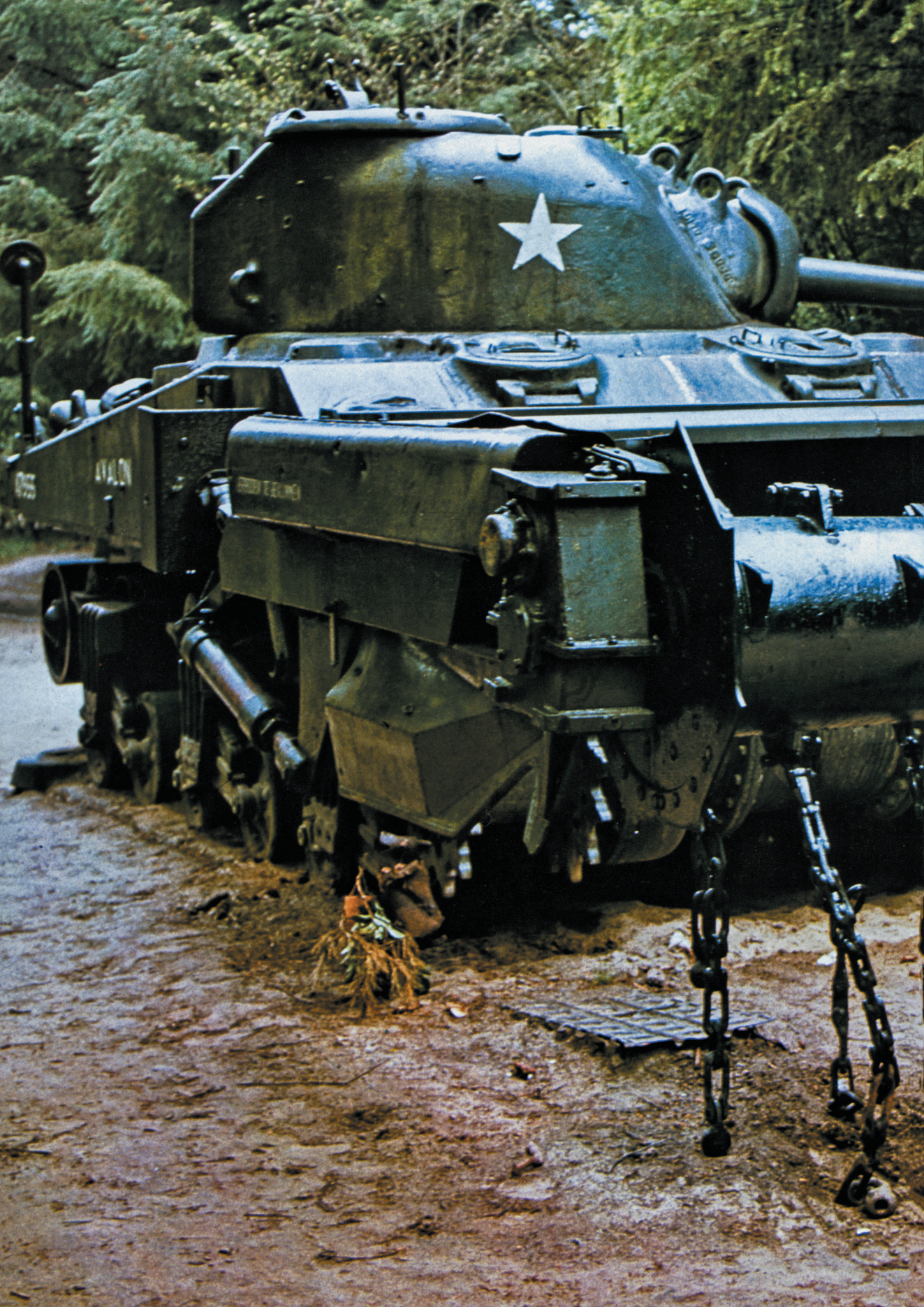
Study	430	Cloaks, 1st floor	449
Living room	431	Maid	450
Bedroom	432	Nurse	452
Guest room	433	Guest room	455
Hall, 1st floor	434	Guest room	456
Kitchen	435	Drivers	460
Dining room	447	Cloaks, basement	461
Dining, children	448	Housekeeper	462

BORMANN'S BUNKER

Study	394	Kitchen	404
Bedroom	395	Maid	407

MISCELLANEOUS

Platterhof	210	Press office	353
Goring's bunker	343	A. Speer's house	398
Guard, Main gate	346	Teleprinter room	465
Bormann's office	348	Hermann Goring	608



The Occupation

An interesting account of the first days following the capture of Berchtesgaden is given in the 101st history 'Rendezvous with Destiny', and is well worth repeating:

And the visitors came—in trucks, weapons-carriers, jeeps, motor-cycles, sedans, ambulances. By the first of June they were averaging three thousand daily and as many as ten thousand on Sundays. The airborne troops acted as guides and guards and signs warned against taking souvenirs in Hitler's houses, but everything removable, from bed springs to doorknobs and light fixtures, went. The weather was good for sightseeing, the roads to Berchtesgaden were excellent, and apparently everybody in south Germany eventually turned up, usually with a camera or a pair of binoculars around his neck. On the mountain a man might run into anybody; his senator, the Queen of the Belgians, Gertrude Stein, Field Marshal Alexander, or the buddy he last saw in the IRTC at Camp Croft, South Carolina.

There were other attractions for the Berchtesgaden tourist in the summer of 1945. Almost within walking distance of the town was Germany's most beautiful lake, the Konig-See, six miles long, with shores which were often sheer cliffs. The best accommodations were not for the visiting GIs but for the enlisted men of the 101st. The shore hotels had been taken over as rest camps and extra beds had been placed in the high-priced bedrooms. Germans had been hired to cook, clean, and wait on tables and men from all units of the 101st were eligible to come here on 72-hour passes. The swimming beach and electric motor launches on the lake, however, were open to the touring GIs. In Berchtesgaden the luxurious Berchtesgaden Hof, once Kesselring and his staff had been moved out, was taken over as a rest centre for the Division's officers.

In an inn at Unterstein, about half-way between Berchtesgaden and the lake, was another tourist attraction. A sign hanging outside, 'The Hermann Goering Art Collection—Through Courtesy of the 101st Airborne Division', explained the contents.

The art treasures had been found in a sealed tunnel near Berchtesgaden. Nearby had also been Goering's private train with its luxurious double-bed sleeping rooms, tiled bathrooms, and lounge cars. The train was pulled out on a siding and became an at-

Top: The Berghof terrace, beloved by Hitler for its magnificent view of the surrounding mountains (Ullstein). Above: Soldiers of the Seventh Infantry, Fifth Tank Destroyer Group, enjoy the view. L-R Private Vincent Constable, Private Joseph Bryan, Corporal Donald Shumaker and Corporal Frank Goodney (IWM). Below: The nearest one can get today to the same view; standing on top of the garage.

traction in its own right. Hitler's four-ton armoured Mercedes-Benz touring car was picked up and replaced General Taylor's jeep. Colonel Sink got from place to place in Goering's roadster, another mammoth armoured affair.

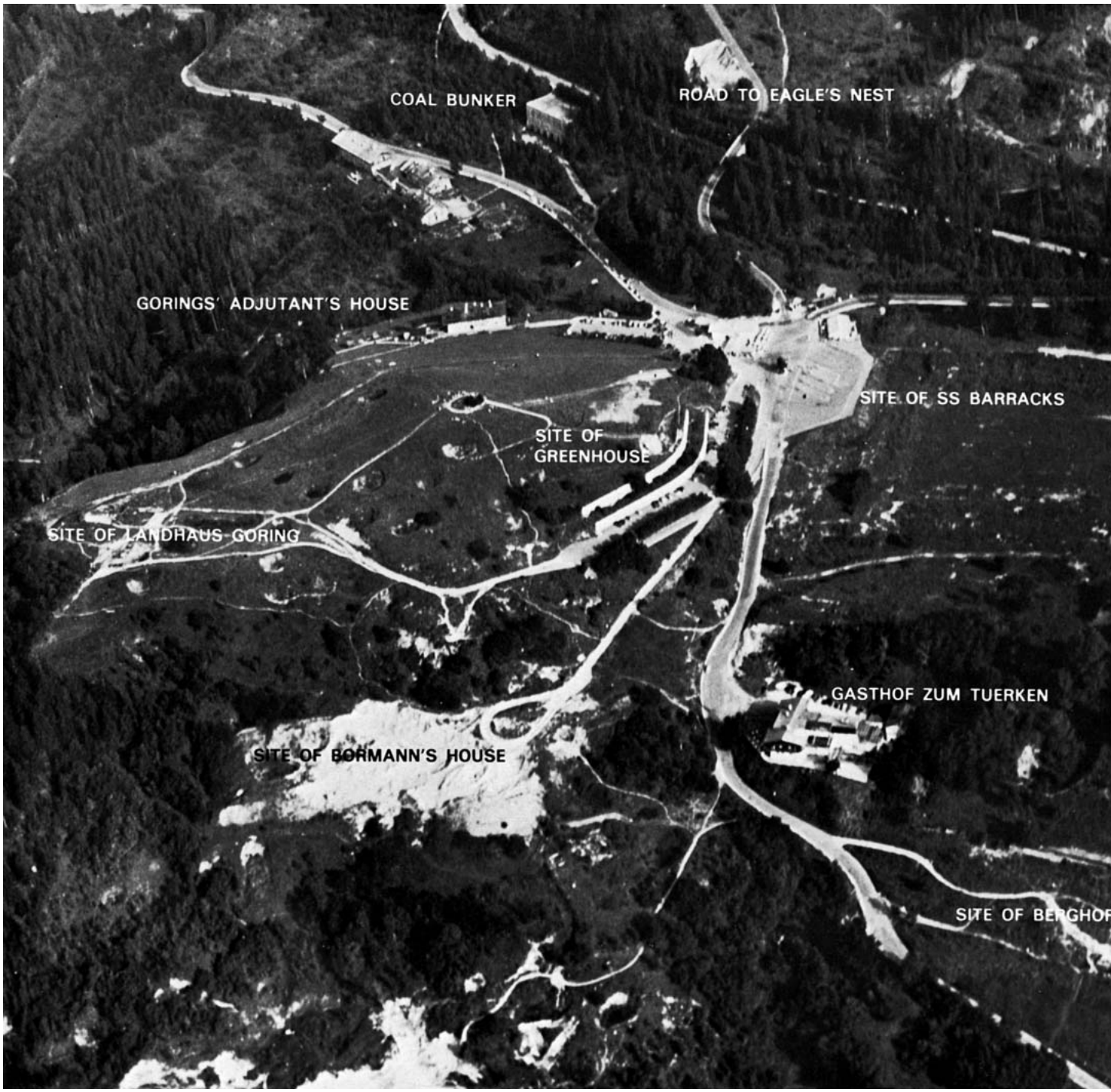
Among the other outstanding finds was a cache of approximately $4,080,000 in twenty-six different currencies. This was dug up on May 23 in a barn near St. Johann and was supposed to have been a private fund buried for Heinrich Himmler. Another fund of 900,000 Reichmarks was dug up on May 30 at Ruhpolding-Zell. In the Bad Reichenhall home of Dr. Morell, a personal physician to Hitler, was found what was believed to be the largest microscope in the world. Working on electronic principles and weighing 22 tons, the instrument was said to have a magnification of 100,000 power.

All of these large and valuable finds, while interesting to the line soldier, did not have the personal appeal that certain other more humble but also more tangible treasures had. The more or less legitimate loot which a man had a chance of finding and keeping for himself included cameras and binoculars (both of which, during hostilities and for a short time after, Germans were not allowed to have), pistols, shotguns, hunting rifles, telescopic sights, and the like. These items were supposed to be turned in by civilians to their Burgermeisters and those officials were to hold them for the military authorities. But there were many slips between the home and the Burgermeister's office and enterprising Americans often saved the villagers and farmers a trip by taking over the contraband themselves. Liquor was another choice find and many a thirsty man probed for bottles more thoroughly than he had ever probed for mines.

Some of the happiest hunting took place in the materiel assembly areas, where the German Army units brought together their weapons and supplies. A rifle company in a far mountain village might find itself heir to and overseer of a pastureful of everything a German division had in its possession at the end of the war: a couple of batteries of 150mm guns; fifty or a hundred vehicles of every nationality, description and condition; a hundred or so horses; several thousand rifles (the rifles which went home represented the choice of the lot); a miscellany of machine guns, military radios, ordnance tools, tents, telescopic sights, helmets, gas masks, and pistols; perhaps cases of brand new P-38s, Berettas, or Walthers. Sometimes some of these things just disappeared, sometimes the German soldiers bringing them in were saved having to carry them all the way to the dump. Some Germans refused to turn in their pistols and hid them (woodpiles were favourite places, apparently on the theory that next winter, when the Americans were gone, the users of the wood would find them) or threw them into the streams. Hundreds were taken from streams within a few yards of bridges and many a woodpile was torn down. Some were hidden in the attics of schools or buried. The net result was a sharp break in the price of pistols within the Division itself although a more united front was presented to the thousands of visitors. The shrewder traders would take their pistols to Berchtesgaden or Konig-See, discreetly drop a few hints to the less fortunate GI tourists, and return to their companies richer in schillings, marks, francs, cameras or whatever the visitors may have had. There were even some Luftwaffe planes in flying condition; after a couple of experimental flights and the crash-death of a 506th officer Division put out a strict notice grounding its airborne personnel.

Above: The famed window (which could be lowered), with its view of Untersberg, Berchtesgaden and Salzburg. Below: The curtain has come down on Hitler's performance, and these GIs enjoy an uncluttered view of the mountains (Keystone).

Below left: The road past the Berghof—on the hill top, Bormann's house (IWM). Below: Today, without the ruins of the Berghof to hide it, the 'Tuerken' alone remains standing.



Obersalzberg today

Because of its association with the Nazi regime, the Obersalzberg, with all its ruins, was confiscated by the Allies after the war. The Fuhrer area was turned into an American recreation zone; entry was forbidden to Germans and only servicemen of the occupation forces (or foreigners, after special permission had been given by the local occupation office) were allowed into the territory. The Tea House on the Kehlstein mountain was christened 'The Eagle's Nest' by the Americans, and visitors, especially after the currency reform in 1948, increased to equal the pre-war figures, but for different reasons. Now they came to see the place where the historical events of the previous decade had been determined. Berchtesgaden itself, not within the restricted area, responded to the tourists, on which the town had always depended for its livelihood, and pressed for the release of the Obersalzberg.

By the end of 1951 the US authorities finally agreed to the re-opening of the Obersalzberg on the condition that the ruins of the Berghof and the Goring and Bormann houses be eliminated. Whilst the town of Berchtesgaden accepted this decision, others, for a variety of reasons, tried to win public support for the preservation of the ruins. Certain citizens from other parts of Germany mourned the ending of the once 'holy place' and talked of a 're-awakening from the ruins'. Some visitors even sang the 'Horst Wessel' song on the ruins.

Faced with this behaviour, the German Government, as well as the US occupation forces, were of the opinion that political demonstrations could only be avoided by eliminating the ruins—a conclusion which in itself was used as ammunition by re-emergent political parties.

Strong protests followed the decision to erase these sites, with attacks in the press, ministerial visits and conferences. The authorities remained adamant and on Wednesday April 30, 1952 at 5.05 p.m. Hitler's house, the Berghof, was blown up by a German demolition firm.

The editor has been unable to discover the true reasoning behind the choice of this day; was it an accident that the very day chosen was that on which Hitler had committed suicide in Berlin exactly seven years before—even to the hour when his body was being burnt?

The Goring and Bormann houses were also demolished and the rubble cleared from the sites. Likewise, the ruins of the SS barracks next to the Platterhof were cleared and replaced with a sports field. The Platterhof

Above: April 30, 1952, 5.05 p.m. The big bang courtesy of the German demolition firm Schmoezl on the orders of the Bavarian Government (Zeitz). Below: The overgrown site of the Berghof today — notices read 'Unsafe Entry forbidden'.

itself, after remaining a sad picture of destruction, was later taken over by the American forces. Completely renovated, all the rooms modified and re-equipped, it was renamed the General Walker Hotel and re-opened as a recreation centre for US Forces. Today, the Americans pay the Bavarian Government for the use of the hotel. Materials from the cinema, badly damaged in the RAF raid, were released by the Americans for the rebuilding of the Herz-Jesu-Church in Munich.

Two buildings were allowed to remain—the Eagle's Nest and the RSD Criminal Police building next to the Berghof. The latter, now named 'Gasthof zum Tuerken', provides one of the tourist attractions as from here one can enter part of the underground bunker system which connected it to the Berghof. These tunnels, devoid of any fixtures or fittings due to looting, were surveyed by the American engineers in 1945 and then sealed up.

The Eagle's Nest, Hitler's Tea House, is the major tourist attraction, but because of its height (over 8,000 feet above sea level), it is closed by snow-falls between October and May. It was intended to demolish this as well as the other ruins of Obersalzberg. As it had been untouched in the bombing, the Landrat of Berchtesgaden, Herr Jacob, made a strong protest against the proposal. The Bavarian Minister, Dr. Wilhelm Hoegner, personally inspected the bulding and was of the opinion that the destruction of the place would be nonsense. He was able to win over the occupation forces and the ministerial advisory committee on this point. The Bavarian Government then leased the 'Kehlsteinhaus', as it is now called, to the Berchtesgaden Alpine Association. Today it is open as a restaurant during the summer months and Bundespost buses transport thousands of visitors up the winding road, constructed by Bormann, to the parking area below the summit. (No cars are allowed on this road). From there either the original lift can be used to reach the restaurant, or alternatively a steep footpath. (During its early US occupation, officers could use the lift whilst enlisted men had to use the path.)

Work on the Rossfeld-Eckersattel road, begun by Bormann, ceased when the war began. In 1955 it was decided to continue with construction of this circular highway which now passes through Austria before returning to Obersalzberg. A small toll is charged for the use of this road which is purely a scenic route. The views are incredible and during the winter it gives access to several ski runs.

So what now remains of the demolished houses at Berchtesgaden? In our previous 'After the Battle' tours we have been excited to find even ruins, and in this we were not disappointed on the Obersalzberg.

Hitler's garage, the roof of which formed the terrace of the house, is absolutely intact, together with fireplace. Even after thirty years of looting, the historic drive, up which so many famous personalities ascended, still remains as our pictures show. The nearby woods, still rubble-strewn, show defence trenches.

Less remains of Goring's home, although the layout can be easily determined, including the entrance to the shelter and the filled-in swimming pool. Perhaps significantly, least remains of Bormann's house, as his was the predominant force behind all the constructions. Earth and rubble were excavated from the site of his house to build the car parking area nearby.

The SS sentry hut below the Berghof is complete except for its wooden superstructure, as our photograph shows; only the ruins remain of the other on the Platterhof road.

Two significant ruined buildings still remain standing: one is Hitler's Guest House pictured on our cover, the other the old Platterhof servants' quarters and garage. Although both are marked 'Off limits', the editor looked at these notices with his Nelson eye in order to take our photographs.

AFTER THE BATTLE

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Hermann Goring's 'Vermeer'

As we know Major-General LeClerc's French troops were finally able to enter Berchtesgaden on the evening of May 4. There they found Hermann Goring's private train standing in a siding of the station. The train contained the Reichmarschall's personal art collection which he had evacuated from his estate at Karinhall, outside Berlin. The paintings, statues, and works of art were to have been stored in a nearby bunker, but when the French arrived only a few items had been unloaded, the bulk of the collection remaining in the nine railway wagons. The French troops were more interested in rescuing a stock of champagne and whiskey stored in two of the compartments and, other than peppering the train with machine gun fire, left its contents alone.

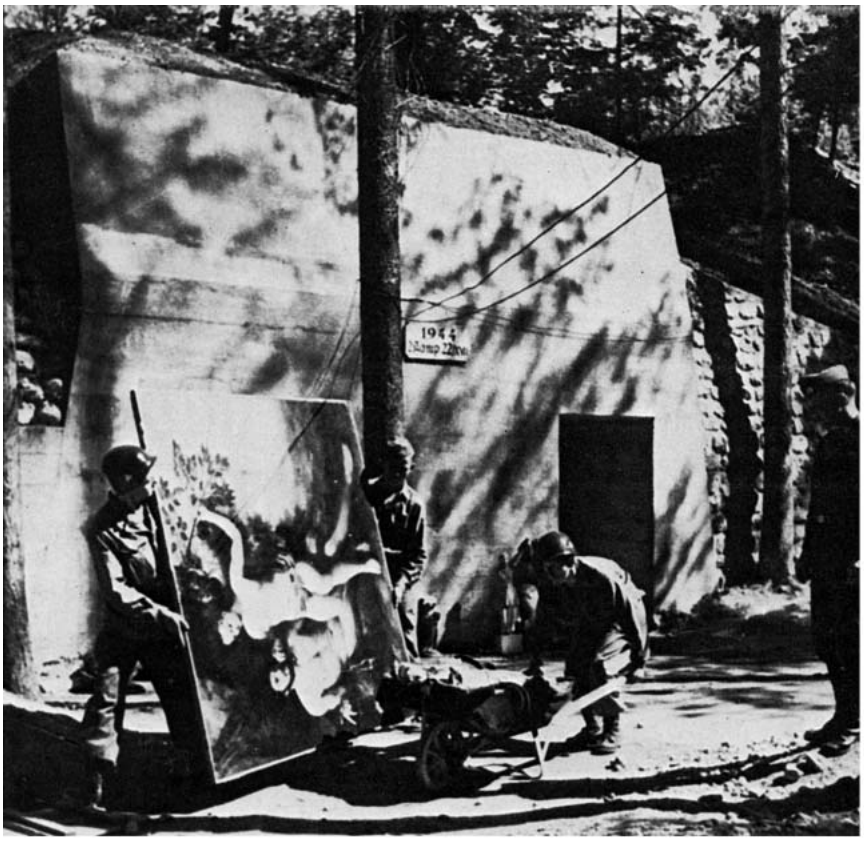
When the 101st Airborne Division arrived the following day the train and associated bunker with its contents became their responsibility, in particular that of Major Harry Anderson, Military Government Officer with the 101st. Under his supervision, the collection was moved from the train and bunker to a nearby Luftwaffe officers' rest house at Unterstein, a suburb of Berchtesgaden. At the rest house not only was the collection (having a theoretical value of a hundred million pounds) easier to guard, but it gave Major Anderson the opportunity of having it set up as an exhibition.

Major Anderson was told of more art treasures in the possession of Frau Goring, who was staying in a castle belonging to a South American about fifty miles further south, at Zell-am-See, in Austria. Major Anderson paid her a visit and found in her possession some of Goring's best canvases of the fifteenth century Flemish School — about thirty paintings from the celebrated Renders collection of Brussels. M. Renders claimed he had been forced to sell the paintings to the Reichsmarschall, but to Major Anderson this was a problem for the follow-up units of the Monument, Fine Arts and Archives section of the US Forces, whose job it would be to authenticate ownership and restore all art looted by the Nazis to the rightful owners. Major Anderson also recovered, on the same visit, a canvas measuring about thirty inches square, from Frau Goring's nurse. The nurse said Goring had given it to her in a package the last time she saw him saying, 'Guard this carefully. It is of great value. If you should ever be in need, you can sell it, and you will not want for anything the rest of your life.' The package contained Goring's 'Vermeer'.

Jan Vermeer of Delft, 1632-75, is the rarest of all the Dutch master painters; only forty-one of his canvases are known to exist throughout the world. Goring's 'Vermeer' was entitled *Christ and the Adultress*, and was priceless, in that, the only other 'Vermeer' with a religious theme is *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* — given to the National Gallery in Edinburgh in 1927. Ironically, as was the lot of many of the Dutch masters, Vermeer died a bankrupt and the twenty-one paintings he left in his house did not fetch enough to clear his estate.

Above: Goring shows Prinzregent Paul of Jugoslavia his art collection at his mansion at his Karinhall estate outside Berlin (Ullstein).

Above: Goring at the Luftwaffe headquarters in Berchtesgaden. Below: The Headquarters was taken over by the American authorities in 1945 and in 1954 it was opened as a Religious Retreat house now called the Alpine Inn. Our comparison picture was taken in March 1975.



Top: Beneath the headquarters buildings a bunker was constructed, the date on the plaque stating the year of construction as 1944. Part of the Karinhall treasure was stored here; the picture shows Major Harry Anderson supervising the removal of an oil painting of 'Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden'. Above: After many hours of searching we found the bunker, blown up and sealed off inside, overgrown and certainly forgotten!

In 1937 a new 'Vermeer' *Christ at Emmaus* came to light to arouse acclamation all over the world. Dr. Bredius, the famous connoisseur of Dutch painting, discovered the picture in Paris in 1936. He was convinced that it was a hitherto unknown work by Vermeer, the rarest of all Dutch masters. The past history of the picture was as reassuring as that of many another accepted 'old master'. Dr. Bredius learned that it had belonged to a Dutch family. One of the daughters had married a Frenchman in the middle eighties. The picture had been a wedding present and she had taken it with her to Paris. The picture remained in the attic until the couple died. It had come to light again when the house was being dismantled.

Through Dr. Bredius, the Boymans Museum had become interested in the picture. Other experts were called in. A few questioned it, but the majority accepted it as a Vermeer. In 1937, the directors of the Boymans Museum purchased the *Christ at Emmaus* for the staggering sum of £160,000. Unknown to the outside world, five more 'Vermeer's' were 'discovered' during the war years. All were of religious subjects. *The Last Supper* was bought for £160,000 by van Beuningen, the great private collector of Rotterdam followed by the *Head of the Redeemer* for £40,000. Then *Jacob's Blessing* went to the Nazi-controlled Dutch government for an exhorbitant sum whilst Goring traded a hundred and thirty seven pictures from his collection,

Two wooden statues of the 'Madonna and Child' are unloaded from the freight train at Berchtesgaden station for transportation to the rest house exhibition.

with an estimated value of £165,000 for his 'Vermeer'. Finally in 1943 the Rijks Museum in Amsterdam paid £125,000 for the *Washing of the Feet.*

At the time all this was unknown to Major Anderson and the exhibition at Unterstein was a great success, perhaps too great a success. After one or two pieces were believed to have disappeared his seniors began to worry about the security aspect and finally he received orders to close the show.

The story of the restitution of the looted art is fascinating and will be dealt with in depth at a future date. At the time the Goring collection was evacuated from the rest house to the Central Collecting Point in Munich in the summer of 1945, plans were being formulated by the Allied Military Government as to the right course of action to make sure every item was returned to its rightful owner. Centralising all the art in the American sector in Munich was the first step.

The officers assigned to evacuate the Goring collection were Lieutenant Lamont Moore in peace time on the staff of the National Gallery, Washington and Lieutenant Thomas Howe of the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco also the author of a fascinating book on the subject 'Salt Mines and Castles'.

It is from his book that we take up the story:

Major Anderson appeared as we were finishing breakfast. We declined his offer to obtain rooms for us at the elegant Berchtesgadener Hof in town. We wanted to be on the spot. There was plenty of room in the rest house where we would be working; and we could mess with the half-dozen officers billeted in the adjacent barracks. The major introduced us to Edward Peck, the sergeant, who had been working on an inventory of the collection.

Together we made a tour of the premises. The paintings alone (over a thousand of them) filled forty rooms. Four rooms and a wide corridor at the end of the ground-floor hall were jammed with sculpture. Still another room was piled high with tapestries. Rugs filled two rooms adjoining the one with the tapestries. Two more rooms were given over to empty frames, hundreds of them. There was the "Gold Room" where the objects of great intrinsic value were kept under lock and key. And there were three more rooms crammed with barrels, boxes and trunks full of porcelain. One very large room was a sea of books and magazines, eleven thousand altogether. A small chapel on the premises was overflowing with fine Italian Renaissance furniture.

Lamont and I had been looking at this assemblage for some little time before we noticed an unframed canvas standing on the wash-basin by the window. The upper edge of the picture leaned against the wall mirror at

Above: The ex-Luftwaffe rest house at Unterstein only a mile or so from the bunker was the venue for the 101st Division Art Exhibition (U.S. Army).

Above: Today the building is virtually unchanged, laying back from the road in spacious grounds, and used by the German State Railways as an employee holiday hotel.

Above: Goring's 'Vermeer'. Captain Halsey Hay left, Military Government officer and Major Harry Anderson (then Captain), hold the painting, which was found at Frau Goring's home in Austria, for Technician 4th grade Arnowitz to photograph at the rest house on May 26, 1945 (US Signal Corps). Below: Three officers from the evacuation team photographed at the rest house on July 25, 1945, L-R Lieutenant Stephen Kovalyak, Lieutenant Lamont Moore and Lieutenant Thomas C. Howe (Howe).

Above: Han van Meegeren photographed at the trial on October 29, 1947. In the background one of the forgeries 'Jacobs Blessing' (Associated Press).

an angle which made it difficult to get a good look at the composition from where we stood. Closer inspection revealed the subject to be *Christ and the Adulteress.* I studied it for a few minutes and was still puzzled. Turning to Lamont I asked, 'What do you make of this? I can't even place it as to school, let alone guess the artist.'

'Unless I am very much mistaken,' he said slowly, 'that is the famous Goring 'Vermeer'.'

'You're crazy,' I said. 'Why, I could paint something which would look more like a 'Vermeer' than that.'

We consulted the inventory. A few lines below the listing of the Rubens landscape—a picture I had just been admiring in another part of the room—appeared the entry 'Vermeer, Jan . . . *The Adultress* . . . Canvas, 90 x 96 cm.' The subject coincided with that of the picture on the washbasin. The measurements were identical.

The Dutch Authorities, when they heard of the discovery of the 'Vermeer' at Unterstein, were naturally anxious to discover who had sold a rare picture by Holland's greatest painter to the Nazis. The trail led them through three art dealers to a Han van Meegeren living in Amsterdam.

When asked by the Dutch Political Police where he had obtained the picture all he would say was it came from a noble Italian family who were having to sell their heirlooms. A condition of the sale was that their identity should not be disclosed.

Van Meegeren's story did not satisfy the police who were now even more concerned, in that a family in Italy, ally of Germany, were involved. Van Meegeren was taken to police headquarters and accused of being a collaborator.

During the interrogation Van Meegeren broke down and astounded the police by claiming that he had painted the picture together with five other 'Vermeers'; *Emmaus, Head of Christ, The Last Supper, Isaac Blessing Jacob* and *Washing the Feet of Christ!*

Van Meegeren's confession rocked the art world. The experts who had authenticated the rush of 'new' 'Vermeers' hastened to defend their reputations and stated the various scientific tests to which they had subjected the pictures. Whilst van Meegeren sat at home enjoying the dilemma in which he had placed the experts, the authorities still had not solved the mystery of where the 'Vermeers' had come from. The Dutch Government called in an international panel of experts to consider the whole question. Ten months later they gave their verdict: the 'Vermeers' were all forgeries. In the end one of the experts, still dubious, suggested that van Meegeren prove his claim by painting a copy of one of the pictures under police observation. Van Meegeren volunteered to go further than that and paint a new picture *Jesus Among the Doctors* but still after the style of Vermeer (the choice of subject did not lack a certain irony in its application to Van Meegeren against the experts!).

When it was finished in September 1947, the art experts pronounced it stylistically identical with the other paintings.

Van Meegeren was brought to trial in October on the charge of forging Vermeer's signature. He pleaded guilty. He confessed how he had done it for revenge against the system where few painters receive their due rewards during their lifetime. He said that the value of a work is judged, not on its merit as a painting but on the name of the artist — on its 'scarcity value'. That this depended on the word of the expert who certifies a picture genuine. He had painted the pictures to prove he was as good a painter as Vermeer. He had constructed a secret studio in his loft, used original old canvases as a base and only worked with the pigments known to the Dutch masters of the seventeenth century. It was not always necessary to remove the existing pictures for if they were adapted to his own

The auction held on September 5/6 in van Meegeren's home in Amsterdam. The auctioneer Paul Brandt is asking for bids for a protrait of Mrs. Luyting (Associated Press).

compositions or, conversely, if he rearranged his ideas to take advantage of an old picture, this further helped to confuse the experts. He avoided modern zinc white using only lead white used in the seventeenth century and finally baked the painting at a predetermined temperature to harden the paint and simulate the effects of time.

Van Meegeren's trial dragged on to its foregone conclusion, and on November 12, 1947 he received the minimum sentence of one year's imprisonment. But he never served his sentence. Within a month, worn out by the strain of the trial he was dead.

The editor found the story of Goring's 'Vermeer' fascinating and, during our visit to Berchtesgaden, we traced the Luftwaffe rest house at Unterstein where the 101st Art Exhibition had been staged. More difficult was the location of the bunker which in all accounts was described as 'near the station'. After spending over half a day searching and asking we nearly gave up; but our first defeat would have been too galling to consider. We finally came across somebody who could help us . . . the bunker long forgotten . . . blown up inside by the Americans, now overgrown . . . was beneath the Alpine Inn, a religious retreat for the American Military. There the jigsaw fell into place — it had been the Luftwaffe headquarters. At the Alpine Inn the US Padre, a Major, showed us a photograph which he had found, of Goring, as head of the Luftwaffe in the grounds. Of course with hindsight it is easy to see why the paintings were being removed to that particular bunker but at the time . . .

Then came the important part — to find where the 'Vermeer' Christ and the Adultress was today. Claims and counter claims had continued after van Meegeren's death by, not only the owners of the five forgeries, but other collectors of 'Vermeers' previously accepted as genuine. Court cases were held in 1955 and 1958 against one of the experts whose findings were questioned. An auction of van Meegeren's works had been held in his house at Keizersgracht 321, Amsterdam on September 5 and 6, 1950. The paintings were sold for figures in the low hundreds of pounds, the painting executed in court Jesus Among the Doctors selling for about £300.

However none of this helped us, twenty five years later, to find Goring's 'Vermeer'. After much correspondence we traced it to the Bureau van de Rijksinspecteur voor Roerende Monumenten in The Hague. There we saw it in May 1975, hidden away in a fire-proof, steel-doored room with countless other works of art belonging to the Dutch State; admired by Goring; displayed by the 101st Airborne; fought over by experts; only to be still hidden away as it has been for the past twenty five years.

Where is Goring's 'Vermeer' today? Here in a strong room of the Dutch State Collection — never on display and traced by the editor in March 1975. There are no prospects of it being shown; neither will it ever be sold.

AFTER THE BATTLE

PERSONALITY

Lieutenant John F. Kennedy

John F. Kennedy, better known to his family as Jack, completed his education at Harvard University after studying at Princetown University and the London School of Economics.

In June 1941, his brother Joe was enlisted as an aviation cadet by the United States Navy, but when John applied to join the Army, he was turned down because of a spinal injury caused while playing football at Harvard. He went through an extensive course of exercises and treatment to strengthen his back and when he applied to the Navy in October 1941, he was accepted.

After being admitted to the Navy and commissioned as an officer his first job was to work on plans to defend war-production factories in the event of an aerial attack; later he was assigned to edit a news digest for Navy staff in Washington. Restive and frustrated, especially as his brother had gone to a fighting front in Europe, he volunteered his services for a more exciting and dangerous assignment somewhere nearer the front.

But the wheels of bureaucracy turned slowly and it was much later, in Sepember 1942, whilst he was at the Naval Reserve Officers' Training School at Northwestern University, Chicago, that he was posted to the Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron Training Centre at Melville, Rhode Island.

On September 27, he started the intensive course which was to qualify him as a Patrol Torpedo (PT) Boat skipper. The training waters were familiar to Ensign Kennedy, who had sailed there in small boats from the family house at nearby Hyannis Port.

The boats were both the old 77-footer and the latest 80-foot plywood and mahogany speedboats built at the Elco Boat Works at Bayonne, New Jersey, powered by Packard aero engines. They were equipped with dual .50-calibre machine gun mounts on the right forward and left rear sections of the armour-plated deckhouse, with two torpedo tubes amidships and two on the after-deck. Some boats had depth-charge mountings on the bow.

The training courses lasted two months—Ensign Kennedy's best subjects being navigation and seamanship—probably stemming from the fact that he had grown up on small craft. When he graduated he was given his 'PT Boat Driver' rating and ordered to stay on as an instructor at the school.

But Lieutenant (junior grade) Kennedy was eager to be on his way to the battle-front and tried every possible means over the next few months to get posted to the Pacific theatre.

In February 1943, his efforts at last bore fruit and he received orders to proceed to Squadron Two based in the Solomon Islands. As his orders were low-priority, it was March before he reached San Diego, California. Travelling on the *USS Rochambeau,* a former French passenger liner pressed into service as a US troop transport, he arrived at Espiritu Santo, in the New Hebrides group, on March 28.

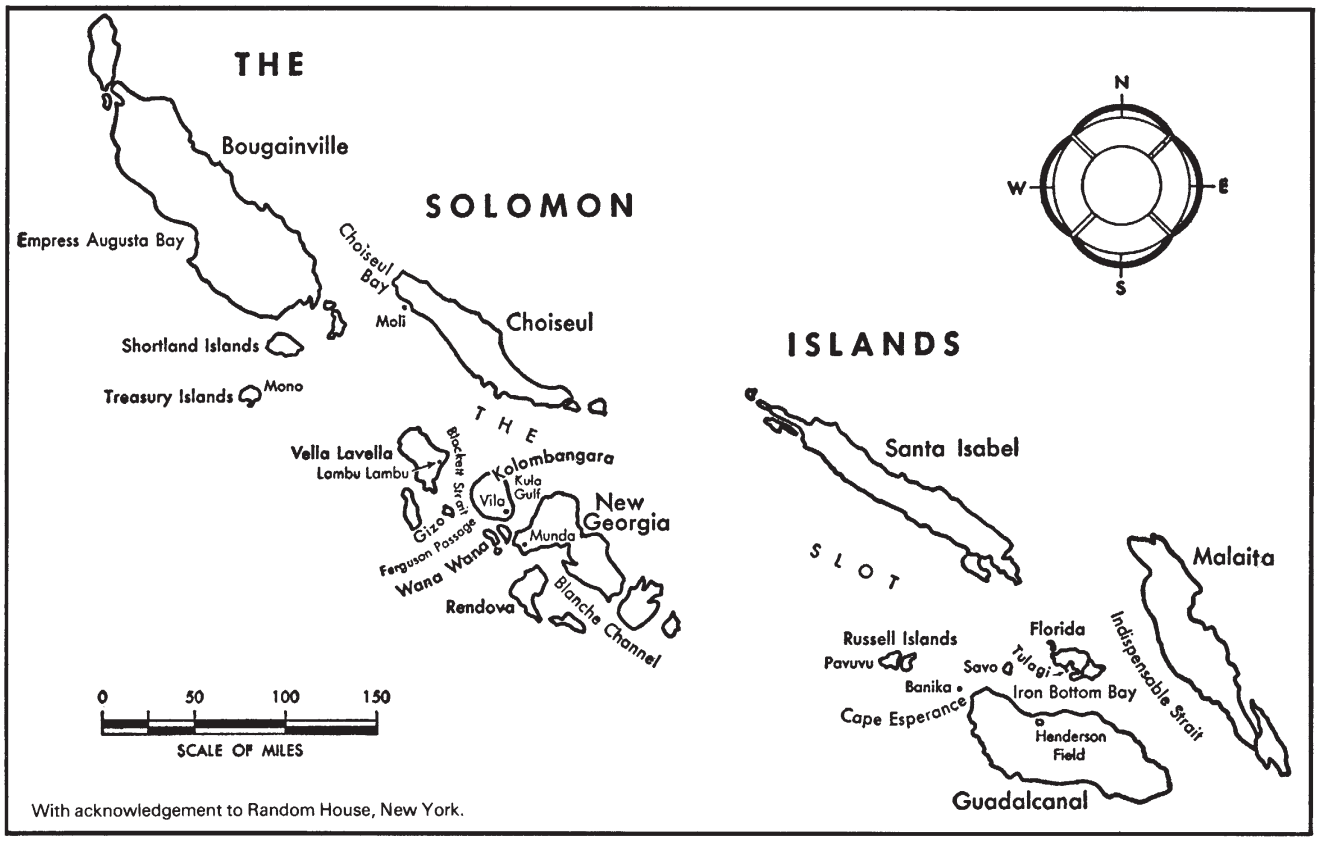
April 7 saw Lieutenant Kennedy sailing into the Guadalcanal area on a tank landing ship carrying a cargo of bombs, army replacements and other naval officers destined for the American base at Tulagi. At 2.00 p.m. as the LST approached the island of Guadalcanal, she intercepted a radio warning of an imminent air attack on the area: US radar in the Russell Islands showed nearly two hundred aircraft heading towards Guadalcanal. The aircraft consisted of 67 'Val' dive-bombers (Aichi D3A) escorted by 110 'Zero' fighters (Mitsubishi A6M), making this the largest Japanese aerial attack since the assault on Pearl Harbour sixteen months previously, Although the LST escaped undamaged, the tanker *Kanawha* and the destroyer *Aaron Ward* were both hit, the latter sinking in Iron Bottom Bay, so named because of the staggering tonnage of Japanese and American warships which found their final resting place there.

The attack delayed Kennedy's arrival at Tulagi, as the LST skipper, fearful of a follow-up raid, temporarily withdrew from the area. On April 12, Lieutenant Kennedy reported to Commander Calvert, the PT flotilla leader and in less than three weeks, after two routine patrols as a relief officer, was assigned a boat of his own—PT-109. PT-109 had been manufactured at the Elco Works in July 1942 and was initially commanded by Ensign Bryant L. Larson. The boat was already a veteran of the Guadalcanal campaign when Ensign Larson was rested after his strenuous tour of duty.

The ten crew members assigned to Lieutenant Kennedy were all veterans: Executive Officer Ensign Leonard Jay Thom, quartermaster (or steersman) Edgar E. Mauer, torpedo man Andrew Kirksey, radioman John Maguire, gunners Charles Harris and Maurice Kowal, engineers Leon Drawdy, Edmund Drewitch, William N. Johnston and Patrick Henry McMahon.

During PT-109's first few patrols under Kennedy's command, she was not involved in any fighting, nor did she have any contact at all with the enemy. Late in May, the boat transferred to the advanced base on the Russell Islands as part of Squadron Two under Commander Alvin Cluster.

On June 30, 1943, the American invasion armada for the New Georgia group of islands was in action before dawn. The main landing force, consisting of the US 172nd Regimental Combat Team, was landed on Rendova Island, and soon overwhelmed the small Japanese occupying force of three hundred. Rendova was intended to be used as an advanced PT boat base for operations throughout the New Georgia island group, all of which would then be within close striking range. Later that day, however, the projected PT boat operations received a severe set-back. During the return trip to Tulagi by the US invasion force, the flagship *McCawley* had been hit by a 'Betty' torpedo bomber (Mitsubishi G4M). That night, whilst being towed down the Blanche Channel, she was hit by two more torpedoes and sank rapidly. Next morning, as Commander Robert Kelly brought his advance elements of PT Squadron Nine into the new base at Rendova, he reported that he had torpedoed and sunk a Japanese transport in Blanche Channel the night before: the *USS McCawley.* Kelly's error caused a severe set-back for proposed PT boat operations in the area, as Admiral



With acknowledgement to Random House, New York.

Turner, whose ship had been sunk, issued a strict order that henceforth the PTs would operate under his direct command.

During this layoff period a new commander, Thomas G. Warfield of Squadron Ten, came to take over the Rendova base. In the third week of July, Lieutenant Kennedy was ordered up to the new base where the PT flotilla now numbered nearly twenty boats.

By this time, the Japanese were relying more and more on the use of metal-hulled, armoured, diesel-powered landing barges to ferry troops and supplies to their various island bases in the Solomons. Air cover was provided by seaplanes which used flares to illuminate PT boat targets before pressing home their attacks. In this, they were very successful. On July 20 at about 1.00 a.m. on one of her first patrols, PT-109 was illuminated near Gizo Island and machine gunned. The crew managed to beat off the attack without being bombed but two hours later another attack wounded two crewmen, Kowal and Drawdy. Edmund Drewitch had been wounded earlier in an accident with a depth-charge and three new crew members, Gerald E. Zinser, Harold W. Marney and Raymond Albert replaced them.

Following another bombing attack during the night of July 25-26, Kennedy decided to copy other skippers and mount a 37mm anti-tank gun on the bows of the PT boat.

On August 1, the Japanese bombed the PT base at Rendova, killing two men and destroying one boat. That night PT-109 set out (with two additional crew members, Ensign George Ross and torpedoman Ray Starkey), in the company of fourteen other boats, to intercept a Japanese force of four destroyers which had been spotted sailing south. The destroyers' mission was to land supplies at Vila, on the southern tip of Kolombangara Island.

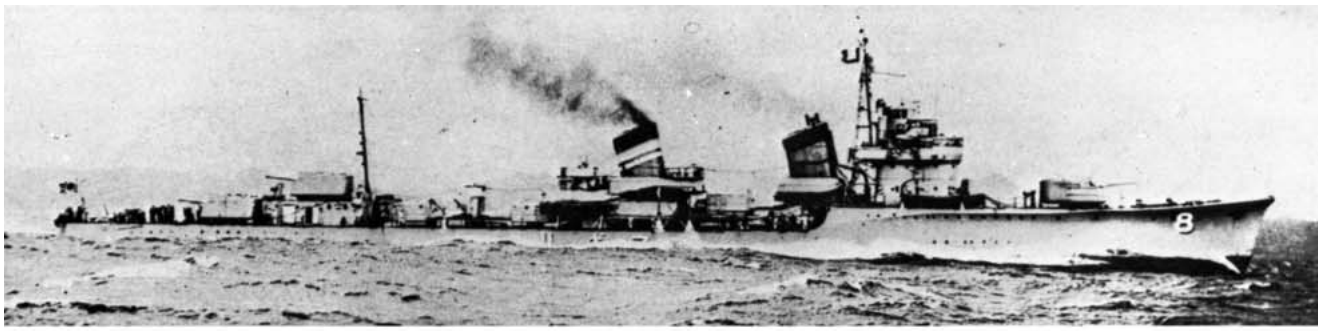
The PT boats spread themselves across Blackett Strait and waited to intercept them. First contact was made by PT boats 157 and 159; six torpedoes were fired without making a hit. Then, further south, PT-171 made radar contact and fired all four torpedoes whilst under fire—all four missed. Three more boats to the east fired another unsuccessful twelve torpedoes but the 'Tokyo Express', as it was referred to by the Americans, swept on unharmed through the Blackett Strait.

The crew of the PT-109 in the South Pacific. Lieutenant Kennedy is on the extreme right (J F K Library).

Lieutenant Kennedy was in the company of PT boats 162 and 169. They had seen the gun flashes to the south and assumed, correctly, that the destroyers had slipped by them. At about 2.30 a.m., with only one engine in gear to keep down the wake, making the boats less visible to the marauding float planes, a lookout in Kennedy's boat suddenly shouted, 'Ship at two o'clock!'

The vessel towering over them was the Japanese destroyer *Amagiri* returning from Vila after completing a successful mission. Sounding general quarters, Kennedy hit the signal to the engine room for full ahead and swung the wheel hard to the right towards the approaching destroyer. At the moment of being run down Kennedy was aiming for a torpedo attack. With only one engine engaged the boat responded sluggishly and as Ross attempted to load the anti-tank gun, the destroyer hit them on the right side, cutting the boat into two pieces. The forward half, containing the engine room and aviation fuel tanks, exploded and caught fire, badly burning McMahon, who was thrown into the water.

Kennedy and Maguire had been knocked flat on to the rear cockpit deck; Mauer and Albert were with them. The forward section sank almost immediately, the rear section being kept afloat by its water-tight compartments. The other PT boats seeing the violence of the explosion assumed all the crew would have been killed, and with Japanese destroyers nearby, did not stop to investigate. When they returned to Rendova, plans were made to hold a memorial service for the crew of PT-109.



The Japanese destroyer Amagiri, commanded by Kohei Hanami, which rammed the PT-109. The Amagiri was built in 1928-30 by Isikawazima and launched on February 27, 1930. It was sunk by a mine in Macassar Strait on April 23, 1944 (IWM).

However, Zinser, Starkey, Johnston, Thom, Ross and Harris had all survived the ramming. McMahon, although terribly injured, was also alive. Only Kirksey and Marney were unaccounted for.

Kennedy swam to McMahon, about a hundred yards away, and towed him back to the floating rear section of the PT boat. Thom towed back Johnston, who was only half conscious from swallowing petrol, and Ross rescued Zinser. When they were all on the rear section, which they then discovered was slowly sinking, Kennedy counted heads. For weapons they had six .45 Colt automatics, Kennedy's .38 revolver and three knives. They were surrounded by Japanese-held islands: north-east was Kolombangara, manned by 10,000 Japanese, and north-west Vella Lavella. Gizo was so close that at dawn they could see the Japanese aircraft taking off from the military airfield on the island.

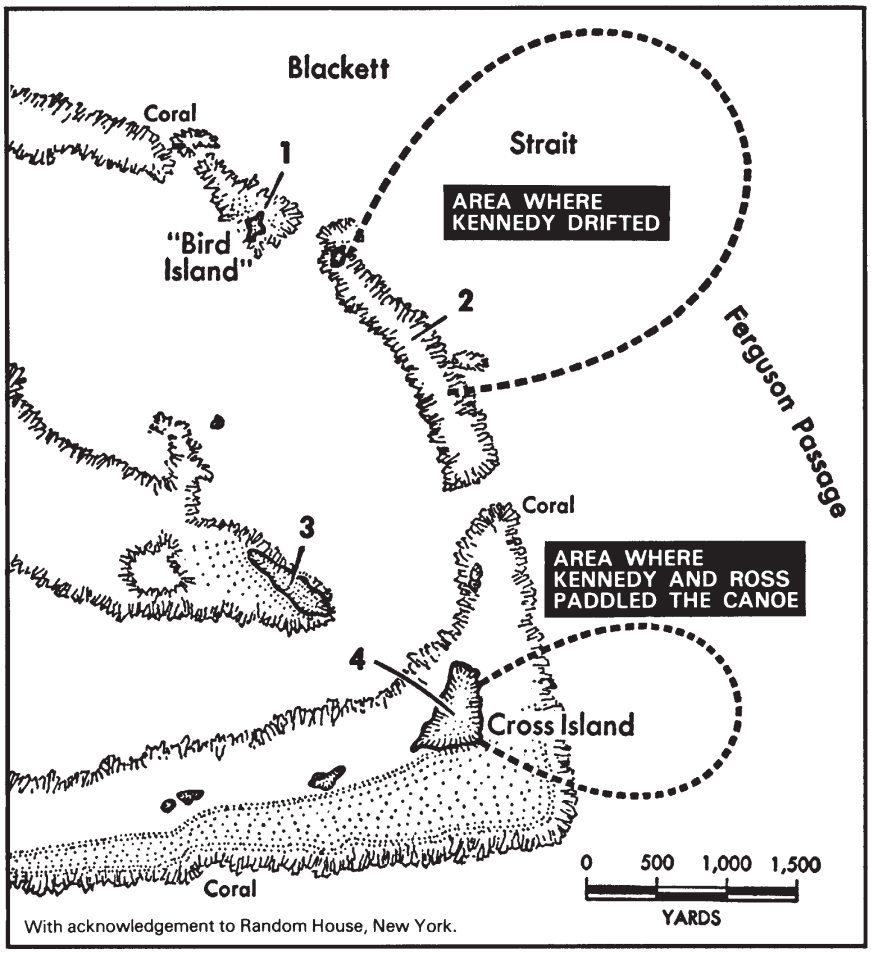
At about 10.00 a.m. the hull, which had been slowly sinking, turned over. All the crew except McMahon and Johnston were already in the water, to avoid attracting the attentions of the nearby Japanese. They caught the two injured crewmen as they slid into the water and Kennedy decided they would have to attempt the swim to a small coral island about three miles away, which they later named 'Bird Island' (*see 1 on map*). The crew began to paddle to the shore holding on to a heavy timber from the boat for support, Kennedy taking McMahon in tow.

After a struggle lasting about five hours they could hear surf breaking, but no sooner had they reached the beach than a Japanese barge slowly passed the island. It failed to spot the Americans and they safely reached the shade of some bushes to rest.

During that Monday Kennedy worked out a plan. He estimated that beyond the island next to them lay Ferguson Passage, a channel used by PT boats en route to the Blackett Strait. He thought that if he could swim out, he may be able to flag down one of the boats.

That evening Kennedy struck out towards the neighbouring island. It was dark by the time he reached the outer coral reef toward Ferguson Passage. It was 9.00 p.m. before he was in a position to swim out directly into the channel; he had no time to lose as the PT boats would soon be on their way north. With a life jacket supporting a battery lantern he had brought to signal with, after reaching deep water he floated into position, treading water as he waited. After about one hour he saw flashes from the west—assuming the boats had taken a different route that night and shivering with cold, he began to return to the coral.

But on his way back he was caught in the heavy current and was swept away north and east (*see 2 on map*). Strength failing, he let the current take him first north, then east and south until, after drifting all night, the current returned him further south along the



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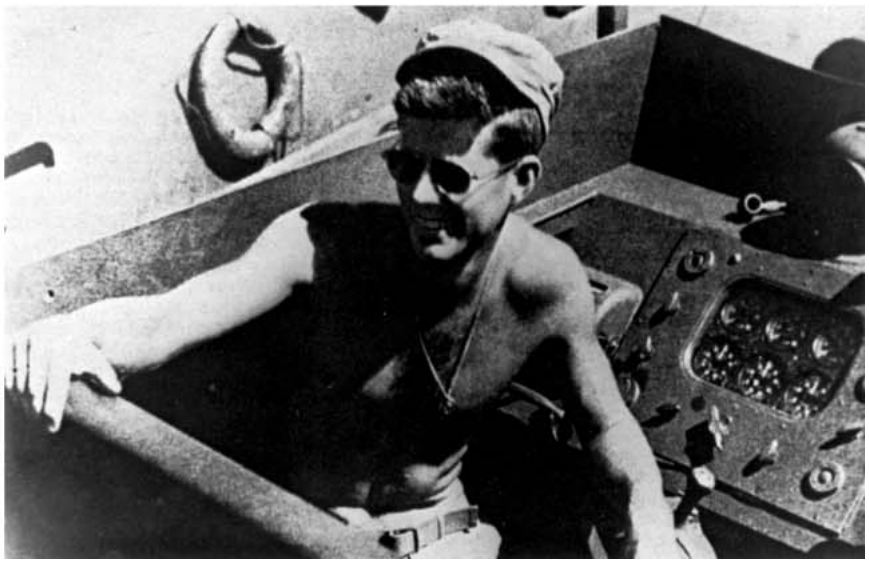


Lieutenant Kennedy in the cockpit of PT-109 at Rendova shortly before the Japanese raid on the base (JFK Library).

outer coral reef. Reaching the shore early on Tuesday morning, his feet and ankles cut by the coral, he still had further to swim to return to Bird Island, where, after a long struggle, he collapsed on the beach.

All day Kennedy lay sick and that afternoon Ross set out for the neighbouring island to try to signal the PT boats with his .45. Although he spent all night on the reef, no boats passed.

When Ross returned in the morning of the next day, Wednesday, Kennedy was feeling better after his night's sleep. He decided they all ought to try to reach a larger island further south nearer Ferguson Passage (*see 3 on map*). The coconut trees they could see there would, hopefully, provide some ripe coconuts to satisfy their thirst and provide some nourishment.

Kennedy led the swim, again towing McMahon, and after three hours they reached land. The other nine, using their log as a support, were caught by the current and carried to the far end of the island. Luckily the island was unoccupied and they all met up safely. That night it rained and they were able to lick the water drops from the leaves of the underbrush.

Thursday, the 5th, found them wet, cold and hopeless, but Lieutenant Kennedy refused to give up. Right on the edge of Ferguson Passage was a large island which he thought was Nauru Island (*see No. 4 on map, actually Cross Island*). That afternoon Kennedy and Ross swam across to it in an hour, cautiously creeping ashore in case it was occupied by the enemy.

Crossing the island, they made their way to the Ferguson Passage side of the island. On the far side they found a small shelter under the trees on the edge of the beach, together with a supply of food and water and, nearby, a one-man canoe. They saw another canoe containing two natives near a wrecked Japanese barge on the reef, but when they tried to attract their attention, they made off.

That night Kennedy took the canoe out into the Passage to wait for PT boats, but none went by. Next morning he returned to Ross on the island and, leaving him there, started back for the island where they had left the remainder of the crew, to take them some of the food and water.

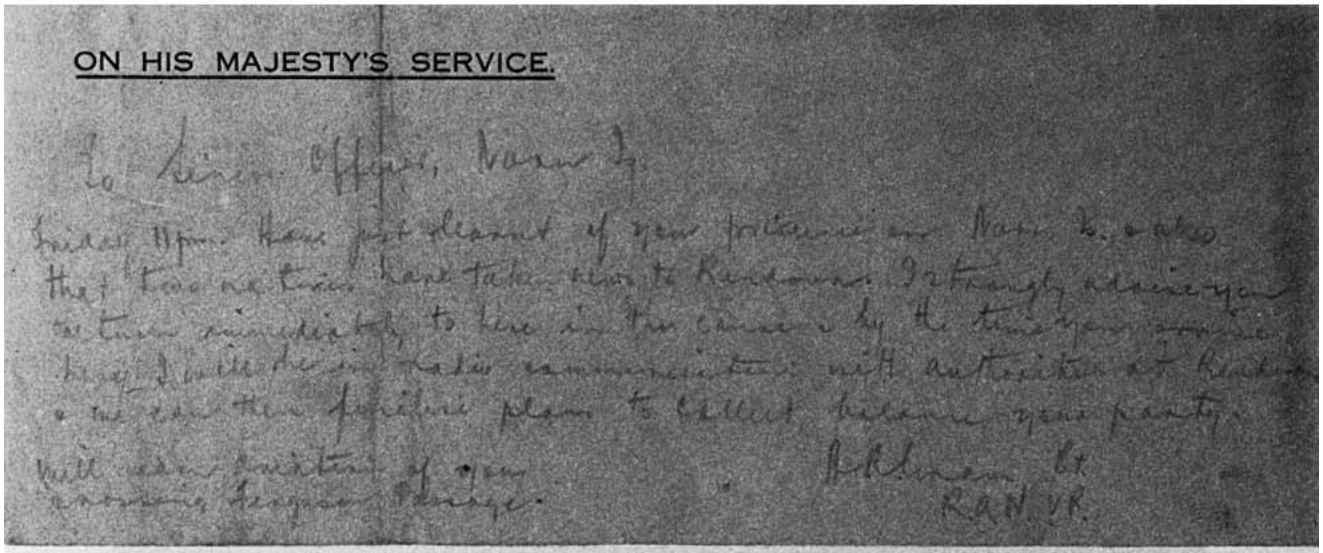
When he arrived at the island he found that the two natives had reached it first and made contact with the crew. The natives had worried the crew by indicating they had seen Japanese on Cross Island—Kennedy and Ross!

On the next day, Friday, the natives took Kennedy back to Cross Island in their canoe, meeting up with Ross on the way who had begun to swim across. Reaching the island, Lieutenant Kennedy scratched a message in a coconut shell for the natives to take south. It read:

NAURU ISL
NATIVE KNOWS POSIT
HE CAN PILOT
11 ALIVE NEED
SMALL BOAT

Above: On his desk in the White House, President John Kennedy gave pride of place to the mounted coconut shell scratched with the message for help, here photographed on August 9, 1962. Where is the shell now? It is due to be displayed at the J. F. Kennedy Museum, Waltham, Massachusetts (J F K Library).

Below: The original message by Lieutenant Evans which President Kennedy kept framed on his wall. This also is in the JFK Library.



To Senior Officer, Naru Is.

Friday 11 pm. Have just learnt of your presence on Naru Is. and also that two natives have taken news to Rendova. I strongly advise you return immediately to here in this canoe and by the time you arrive here I will be in radio communication with authorities at Rendova and we can finalise plans to collect balance your party.

Before leaving, the natives showed Kennedy and Ross the location of a hidden two-man canoe. That night, not sure that the rescue message would reach Rendova, Kennedy and Ross paddled out into Ferguson Passage to try and attract the attention of any passing boats. Out on the Passage they were hit by a sudden squall. As they tried to turn back, they were hit broadside by a wave and capsized. At first they clung to the upturned dug-out and then, for nearly two hours, struggled against the storm to return to the island. Finally the sea tossed them up on to the reef where they painfully crawled over the jagged coral to the beach.

As the sun was rising on August 7, the two Americans were awakened by a group of natives arriving in their war canoe. Scarcely believing their eyes or ears, the native leader, speaking in perfect English, handed Kennedy a letter. It read:

On His Majesty's Service

To senior officer, Nauru Island . . .

. . . Have just learnt of your presence on Nauru Island and also that two natives have taken news to Rendova. I strongly advise you return immediately to here in this canoe and by the time you arrive here I will be in radio communication with authorities at Rendova, and we can finalise plans to collect balance of your party.

A. R. Evans Lt.

Will warn aviation of your crossing Ferguson Passage.

Evans was an Australian coast watcher on Gomu Island near the Japanese held island of Wana Wana; Kennedy and Ross could not believe their good fortune. The natives transported Kennedy and Ross, plus the supplies sent by Lieutenant Evans, back to the island to rejoin their other crewmen. Everyone was overjoyed to see them, hear the news, and receive the supplies.

That afternoon Kennedy, lying in the bottom of the canoe covered with palm fronds, was paddled by the natives to Gomu Island. Lieutenant Evans took him to his makeshift base where he had already been in contact with Rendova by radio. At 6.50 p.m. that evening Lieutenant Evans sent the following message to Rendova:

Lieutenant Kennedy considers it advisable that he pilot PT boats tonight. He will await boats near Patparan Island. PT boat to approach island from northwest

Above: Arthur Evans meets J.F.K. in his office at the White House where they examine the framed letter Evans wrote in 1943 (Wide World).

10.00 p.m. as close as possible. Boat to fire four shots as recognition. He will acknowledge with same and go alongside in canoe. Survivors now on island northwest of Cross. He advises outboard motor. Patparan Island is 1½ miles and bears 214 degrees from Makuti.

The PT command arranged to send two boats to rendezvous that night. They arrived off Patparan at 11.15 p.m. and Lieutenant Brantingham fired four shots from his .45 automatic as a recognition signal. They were answered by three similar cracks and then a louder bang: Kennedy, having only three shots left in his automatic, had used a captured Japanese rifle borrowed from Lieutenant Evans for the fourth shot. He recalled afterwards that the recoil almost knocked him into the water from the canoe.

Contact made, a native acting as a pilot on the bow guided the PT boat through the shoals and reefs to where the crew were waiting. A small dinghy was then used to ferry the crew out to the anchored PT boat, this taking several journeys.

The survivors reached Rendova about dawn on Sunday, August 8, to a welcome of war correspondents, intelligence officers and a press conference. Later Lieutenant Kennedy was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for gallantry in action.

The usual procedure, after the loss of a boat or crew members was to return the crews to the States. The crew of PT-109 were already veterans of twenty patrols and, whilst Kennedy and other members of the crew were confined to Tulagi Hospital, plans were made for their return to America.

But Kennedy would have none of it. He

Above: Lieutenant Kennedy, after he returned from duty in the Pacific, photographed in Los Angeles on January 10, 1944 (Associated Press).

Below: Another visitor also looking at Lieutenant Evans' message on September 25, 1962, is Benjamin Kevu, the Solomon Islander, who met John F. Kennedy for the first time since he paddled him to safety in the South Pacific (Associated Press).

Above: Commander Kohei Hanami of the Japanese destroyer Amagiri graphically illustrates with a teacup how he cut the PT boat in two. Hanami, a farmer, was pictured in Tokyo (Associated Press).

wanted to stay in command of a new boat—if necessary with another crew. Commander Cluster was agreeably surprised at his determination and revoked the orders. He put Kennedy in charge of PT-59, a veteran of Squadron Two since 1942, earmarked for his new programme of converting certain PTs to gunboats.

The new boats, especially designed to attack the increasingly large numbers of Japanese barges coming out of Kolombangara, were to be stripped of torpedo tubes and to have extra .50-calibre machine guns and 40mm automatic weapons fitted. Total armament would be fourteen .50-calibres and two 40mms, with the addition of heavier armour plate. Kennedy, now a full Lieutenant, and his crew (three of his old crew stayed with him, Mauer, Drawdy, Kowal and Drewitch joined them later) had to install the new armament themselves.

On October 18, PT-59, now renamed PTGB-1, being the first of the new breed of gunboats, led five PT boats out of Rendova at 1.15 p.m. They were to transfer to the new American advanced base at Lambu Lambu on Vella Lavella Island which they reached later that afternoon. At nine o'clock that evening they left to patrol the southern shore of Japansese-held Choiseul Island. Shortly after midnight they suffered a bombing attack from the now expected float-planes. Then, at 3.30 a.m., just as they were turning for home, another sudden attack caught the gunners off guard. As the plane turned to attack a second time the gunners were ready, but they were not able to stop a second bomb damaging PT-183. Frustrated, Kennedy returned to Lambu Lambu to file a negative report; except for the collision with the destroyer on August 2, he had not yet, in his career as a PT Officer, had a surface fight.

Further uneventful patrols followed during the rest of October. PTGB-1's next major operation, on November 2, was to rescue a Marine party in trouble during a diversionary landing on Choiseul Island during a major invasion of Bougainville in Empress Augusta Bay. It was a daylight operation, not one suited to the night-fighting PTs. Together with two other PT boats, Kennedy was to keep Japanese surface craft away whilst three landing craft evacuated the Marines.

Lieutenant-Colonel Victor Krulak, in command of the Choiseul Marine task force, tells the story:

> The PTs arrived about 6.15 p.m., November 2. The rain was falling and there were long swells in the mouth of the Warrior River. There were only three LCPLs (Higgins boats) to load the company and they were going to overload the boats. The Japs were pushing them, firing with machine guns and rifles.
>
> The boats were crowded with about fifty men on each one. One boat hit a coral head quite a way offshore, maybe 250 yards, and began to sink. Another boat took it in tow, but it was sinking, so some of the boys got on the other boat.
>
> Kennedy's PT boat came alongside and took some of the people aboard, maybe eight or nine. They pulled the bung on the boat that was sinking and let her sink.
>
> There were three wounded among the people Kennedy took aboard. One was Corporal Schnell; he was badly wounded and died on the PT boat.
>
> The PTs stayed with the boats fifteen miles south along the coast to Voza.

Kennedy had plunged into action but because of the overall need of the moment, had not fired on the Japanese. Instead, he found himself, as on the 109 episode, saving lives. Over the next two days Kennedy made two more patrols to cover the evacuation and, on November 5, came his first taste of action in a combined attack with PT-187 on three barges off Moli Island. The high speed attack went in at 11.00 p.m. and a further six barges were attacked just as dawn was breaking.

Over the next twelve days PTGB-1 and its skipper seemed to be getting into their stride. During the early days of November, when the US Marines were struggling to take over Bougainville, the boat played its part.

Then, on November 18, the doctor at the Lambu Lambu base ordered Lieutenant John F. Kennedy off the boat. His ailments, accumulated in nine months of service, included a worsening of his old back injury and a drop in weight of twenty-five pounds, necessitating his return to Tulagi Hospital and then to the States.

He was recovering from an operation in the Navy hospital at Chelsea, Massachusetts, when he learnt of his brother's death in a radio-controlled Liberator flying from England (*see After the Battle No. 6*). Whilst in hospital awaiting a medical discharge from active Navy duty, he began writing a book 'As We Remember Joe', and following his release from the Navy in 1945 became a special correspondent for the International News Service covering the Potsdam Conference and the first United Nations meeting in San Francisco.

Thereafter he started on his political career which was to lead to his election as President of the United States of America on November 8, 1960. In his office at the Senate Office Building the letter from Lieutenant Evans hung framed on the wall; on his desk was the coconut shell scratched with the message for help. In October 1957, the ordeal of PT-109 was featured on American ABC Television in the Navy Log Show.

Below: Captain F. L. Conklin congratulates Lieutenant Kennedy after he was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for Gallantry in action (J F K Library).

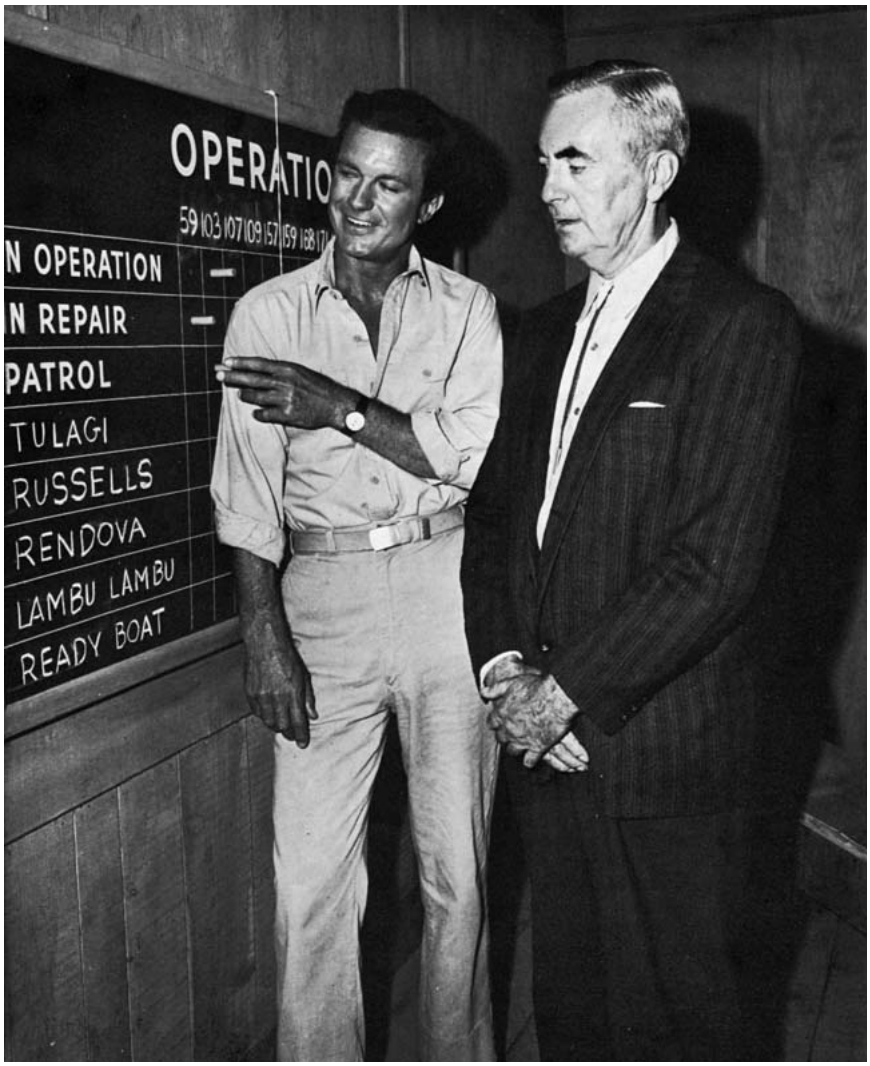
PT-109

There was a long and concerted search for an actor to play John Kennedy. Many artists were considered and by August, 1961, Johnny Carson, 29 year-old Nebraska-born actor, was favourite. The final choice, however, fell on Cliff Robertson. Robertson decided against conscious mimicry of Kennedy, preferring to base his performance on knowledge of his subject rather than give a carbon copy imitation.

Ty Hardin, ex-Texas footballer, was chosen to play Ensign Leonard Thom and Hardin, popular at the time as 'Bronco', consented to have his hair dyed blond and grow a beard so as to more closely resemble Thom. Grant William, ex-TV 'Hawaiian Eye' series, played Commander Alvin Cluster. Another TV actor, Robert 'I Spy' Culp, made his motion picture debut in PT-109 as Ensign George Ross. Other crew members were played by James McCallion (McMahon), Biff Elliot (Mauer), Evan McCord (Marney), Sam Gilman (Starkey), Robert Blake (Harris), Norman Fell (Drewitch), Buzz Martin (Kowal), Clyde Howdy (Drawdy), Sam Reese (Kirksey), John Ward (Maguire), Glenn Sipes (Johnston), William Douglas (Zinser) and David Whorf (Albert). The two other important roles, that of Lieutenant Evans and Benjamin Kevu, the English-speaking leader of the Solomon Island natives, were played by Australian Michael Pate and British actor Errol John.

One of the real life heroes of PT-109, George Ross, actually appeared in the film himself, and is seen in several early scenes as Chief Benson. To play the part, he took a week's holiday from his job as a consultant on the Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime in Washington.

The most difficult casting problem was that of finding the PT boats as this type of craft was no longer used by the US Navy. When the director of the film heard of some air force rescue boats being sold at government surplus sale in Panama City, Florida, he authorised



Cliff Robertson, portraying Lieutenant Kennedy, talks to Patrick McMahon, one of the five original crew members who visited the film set (Warner Bros).

their purchase. Original plans were provided by the president of the Elco Boat Company in Bayonne, New Jersey, manufacturers of the original PT boats. The entire superstructure of each boat was removed in a Miami shipyard, then every feature of the original PTs reconstructed. Reconditioned Packard engines were installed, torpedo tubes built in Warner Bros' prop shop in Burbank, California, together with the .50-calibre and 20mm armament were sent to Florida and installed on the boats.

The US Navy had had its 'Seabees' to construct bases in the Pacific; Warner Bros had its own army to transform Munson Island, twenty-five miles from Key West, Florida, into the Naval bases of Tulagi and Rendova. Before technicians went to work, there were only two buildings on the island—the house of the Sheriff of Monroe County and his caretaker. After several months' work, 450 bushes and small trees had been planted to augment the palm trees planted there in 1921 by the island's then owner, Frank Munson, president of the Munson Steamship Line. Other workers dredged the harbour so it would be safe for the boats to speed in and out. Four piers were constructed, tents set up and native huts built. By the time an ammunition depot, mess hall, and machine shop had all been installed, any veteran of Solomon Island warfare, who suddenly dropped in, would have been certain he had returned to the scene of his WWII action.

Five of the real-life PT-109 crew did visit Munson Island to watch their film counterparts in action. George Ross, of course, was working on the film; likewise Lieutenant-Commander Alvin Cluster, was working as one of the two advisers on the film. The other was Captain J. E. Gibson, still serving in the US Navy, who was Commander of PT Boat Squadron 10 to which Lieutenant Kennedy was attached after the 109 was sunk. The ex-crew were Gerald Zinser, then a postal employee at Winter Park, Florida; John Maguire, a US Marshall at Jacksonville, Florida; Leon Drawdy, a fruit grower also from Florida, and Patrick McMahon, a postman in California.

During the filming, the island had to be sprayed with insecticide twice a day to keep down the mosquitos. Some of the most thrilling battle action was staged only ninety miles from Cuba with such realism that an international incident could easily have been created. Specially staged for the Panavision cameras were the bombing of the LST transporting Kennedy to the South Pacific, the Japanese aerial attacks on Tulagi, Rendova, and on PT-109, the encounter with the Japanese, when Kennedy comes close in shore to rescue a group of Marines, and the engagement when Kennedy skippers PT-109 into battle against Japanese ships. Other scenes were filmed 100 miles to the north at Key Largo. There the sequences where Kennedy and his men evade detection by the Japanese were filmed, after which the picture was completed in the Hollywood studios of Warner Bros. It was during this last stage in the shooting of the interior sequences, that John Kennedy himself visited the film set.

Above: A scene from the film — the 109 has just been cut in half by the Amagiri. Below: The scene where Kennedy attracts the attention of the rescue boat — a pity there are one or two faults — the scene should be at night and Cliff Robertson should have a .45 automatic not the pistol — the Japanese Arisaka rifle is correct (Warner Bros).

Below: The rescue scene, again not strictly accurate as the men were ferried out to the moored PT boat over several journeys. Below left: The re-enactment of Lieutenant Kennedy towing Patrick McMahon (Warner Bros).

AFTER THE BATTLE

PRESERVATION

Above: Troops of the 2nd Battalion, East Yorkshire Regiment pass a Sherman Crab 'flail' tank as they enter Overloon on October 12, 1944 (IWM). Below: Because Overloon was completely rebuilt, no original buildings are left in our comparison taken in March 1975.

OVERLOON

By mid-September, 1944, the Market Garden salient north into Holland and the Americans' north-east thrust towards Aachen had left a great gap between the diverging forces—a gap which was a threat to the flanks of both armies.

Within this area was a vast area of fen and swampland, crossed by countless canals and drainage ditches; sixty square miles of De Peel—the Peel Marshes. The roads through this area were few and limited, presenting an obvious military obstacle to the crossing of the River Meuse and entry into Germany.

In order to free two British divisions to move into the Market Garden salient, responsibility for the area was transferred to the XIX Corps of the US First Army on September 25. By September 28, General Courtney Hodges commanding the US First Army formulated his plan of attack for the Peel Marshes offensive. The capture of Overloon and nearby Venraij was assigned to the US 7th Armoured Division.

The American attack

The XIX Corps estimated that the strength of the German forces opposing them was only about 2-3,000 men. However, Generaloberst Kurt Student, who had taken command of the German First Parachute Army three weeks previously, was fielding seven or eight times that number in General der Infanterie Hans von Obstfelder's 86th Corps.

The American attack began in the afternoon of September 30. As Combat Command B advanced on Vortum to the north, Combat Command A commanded by Colonel Dwight A. Rosebaum attacked Overloon along secondary roads. Early on October 1 the American tanks struck the main defences—German infantry of Kampfgruppe Walther and tanks of the 107th Panzer Brigade. The defensive minefields and panzers accounted for fourteen American tanks; the infantry, which had advanced several hundred yards to the outskirts of Overloon, was forced to halt by intensive small arms, mortar, artillery and Nebelwerfer fire.

The attack was resumed on October 2 at daybreak. In spite of the fire of seven British and American artillery battalions and air support in the afternoon no progress could be made and a series of German counter-attacks held the Americans in place.

Later, on October 3, Combat Command A was replaced by CCR—the German counter-attacks continued. In the intervals the Americans measured their advance in yards. Although the continued efforts of CCA and CCR had surrounded Overloon on three sides, the Germans would not yield.

By October 5, after six days fighting, the US 7th Armoured Division had been halted after advancing only two miles; Overloon was still in German hands and the division had lost 35 tanks, 43 other vehicles and 542 men. On October 6, General Hodges ordered the attacks to be broken off on the following day.

The British attack

At a conference on October 8 the British and American commanders, Field-Marshal Montgomery and General Bradley, agreed to re-adjust the army group boundary to its former position, thereby returning the Peel Marshes to the British. The US 7th Armoured (and the 1st Belgian Brigade) were, however, transferred to the British 8 Corps (commanded by Lieutenant-General Sir Richard O'Connor) of the Second British Army and so would still be involved in clearing the sector.

Field-Marshal Montgomery directed that an early attack should be made using the British 3rd Division against Overloon, then pushing on to capture Venraij to the south.

Above: The 1st Battalion of the Suffolk's enter Overloon from the west passing a ruined garage (IWM). Right: Although nothing shows to prove it, this is the same spot today, indicated to us by Mr. van Daal, one of the museum founders.

The US 7th Armoured were to feign an attack eastwards through the marshes further south.

Here we take up the story from the 6th Guards Tank Brigade history:

On October 9, the Coldstream moved down from Mook to the area just south of Mill and joined the Grenadiers and Brigade Headquarters there. Plans were already far advanced for the attack; the units taking part in this operation were to be the 3rd British Infantry Division and the Grenadier and Coldstream Battalions of the 6th Guards Tank Brigade.

When the tanks arrived, it was disclosed that the attack had been postponed for twenty-four hours on account of the appalling weather conditions. The incessant rain was rapidly turning the surrounding country into a quagmire, making the vital lines of communication virtually impassable.

By the night of October 11, the Coldstream were harboured in a wood two miles north-west of Overloon, poised for the attack the next morning. The Grenadiers were in another wood behind them. Both Battalions were shelled during the night.

For the past twenty-four hours the Royal Engineers had worked unceasingly, cutting rides through the woods and filling in dykes to make it possible for the tanks to advance. They had done this job so well that at mid-day the next day the Coldstream were able to move forward across the dykes without any difficulty. No. 1 Squadron was on the right supporting the Suffolks and on the left No. 3 Squadron was with the East Yorks. No. 2 Squadron was in a position prepared to cover the right flank, and the South Lancs were in reserve.

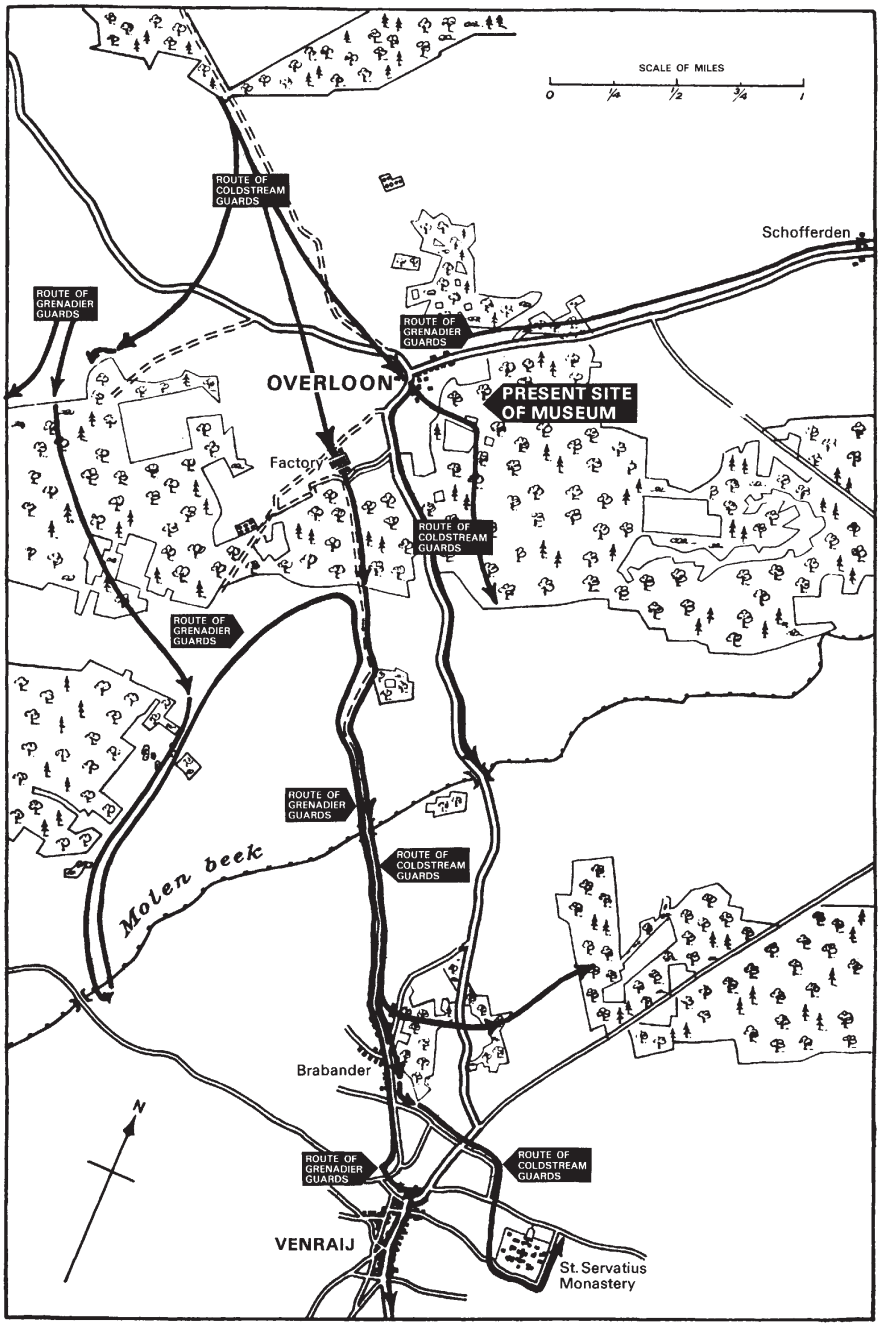
The artillery barrage had been most effective, and for the first half hour everything went according to plan. However, it had been known from the start that the two leading Infantry Battalions were opposed to the idea of capturing Overloon alone, and on reaching the north-western outskirts of the town they divided, the East Yorks veering East and the Suffolks heading due South. As a result of this, Coldstream Headquarters, mounted in tanks and endeavouring to keep control of the battle by sight as well as by wireless, suddenly found themselves the leading troops in front of Overloon. H.Q. troop, quite unaccustomed to such a position, paused to consider the situation. The Infantry, seeing the tanks at a standstill, immediately followed suit and a stalemate ensued.

Reports from the two leading Squadrons showed that they were making satisfactory progress and it began to look as if the left and right would succeed whereas the centre would fail. This seemed all the more likely when Headquarter Troop tried to move forward to encourage the Infantry and immediately ran into a minefield containing Riegel mines. This type of mine had not yet been encountered and it proved powerful enough to penetrate the heavy base plates of a Churchill. First the Rear Link Tank and then the spare Rear Link tank fell victims to this new weapon and in each case four members of the crew were seriously wounded.

The Commanding Officer's tank, Eagle, also touched off one of them but it was not seriously damaged, and the Commanding Officer continued forward with the Infantry, only to find a few minutes later that he was cut off from the rest of his Battalion Headquarters. He therefore remained to conduct the battle on the outskirts of Overloon.

By this time the two forward Squadrons were also in serious difficulties. No. 1 Squadron reported that a Panther had knocked out two of their leading tanks. Then, almost before No. 1 had finished speaking, No. 3 were reporting heavy casualties from mines and anti-tank guns near Overloon.

After the Suffolks had called up their reserve company, the situation began to improve. A fresh plan was made which



Above: Looking north along the road to Overloon, where it crosses the Moten beek stream. The forest in the background was severely contested during the 1944 fighting and the National War Museum is now situated just on the other side of these woods.

Left: This Churchill and Sherman V have just passed the area now occupied by the Museum and have reached the village church (IWM). Above: After the war the church was rebuilt further down the main road to the left in the centre of the new Overloon.

eventually enabled them to reach their final objective, a factory to the south-east of Overloon. On the left, No. 3 Squadron succeeded in forcing a passage through the mines, and soon the Infantry were established on the eastern quarter of the town.

Meanwhile the Royal Engineers had been called forward to clear a gap through the minefield in front of Overloon so as to allow HQ troop tanks to join up with the Commanding Officer and help the Infantry into the town. Although snipers and mortars were very active, a gap was cleared, and the remainder of the tanks were able to enter Overloon and help the Infantry to mop it up.

The fighting on the left flank was distinguished by a famous exploit which gained the Victoria Cross for Sergeant G. H. Eardley of the 4th Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry. Single-handed, with his Sten gun and a few grenades, this NCO destroyed three successive machine-gun posts manned by the redoubtable paratroops, a performance which not merely staggered all who saw it, but also ensured the success of his Battalion in its task.

The stubbornness of the German defence can be gauged from the fact that it took the units a further five days to cover the remaining three miles to Venraij up against the same fierce defence that had halted the earlier American attack. On October 17 the British units finally entered Venraij.

The majority of Americans killed during the first battle are buried at the American War Cemetery at Henri-Chapelle in Belgium. Here there are 7,989 graves. The German dead are interred in Ysselsteyn German War Cemetery south of Venraij, where there are 31,397 Second World War graves. The British are buried at various cemeteries including the ones at Overloon and Venraij.

Left: Having just passed the church, these Churchill VIs, heavily beefed up with spare tracks, have reached the main road through Overloon (IWM). Above: Significantly, the side road up which the tanks had come is now named Museumlaan.

Left: This Sherman V (note extra armour to protect fuel tanks) is on Vierlingsbeekseweg passing the ruined bakery and schoolmaster's house (IWM). Above: The same view today—to the left 14 Oktober Plein.

The National War and Resistance Museum of the Netherlands

Overloon village was entirely destroyed in the fighting in which two German battalions were completely destroyed. Eight hundred Germans of the First Parachute Army died.

In 1945, the British 3rd Division, which had been responsible for the capture of Overloon, helped seven Dutch founder members set up an embryo museum sited in the woods to the east of the devastated village. It was ground that had been fiercely contested by the Germans and trenches and foxholes covered the area. It was to become a true 'battle museum' unique in Europe, perhaps even the world. In August the first exhibits arrived when the British towed in a Cromwell, Churchill and Panther knocked out in the Battle of Overloon.

The Cromwell MkIV (Exhibit 4) ex-British 11th Armoured Division, had been put out of action by a direct hit during the final attack on Overloon. The shot set fire to the engine and this in turn caused the ammunition to explode. The Churchill Mk V (Exhibit 43), named 'Jackal', one of the four tanks of the Squadron Headquarters of No. 2 Squadron of the Coldstream Guards, was knocked out by a mine on October 12, 1944. The Panther V (Exhibit 2) had seen two years service on the German eastern front before being issued to the 107th Panzer Brigade in July 1944. In September the unit was sent to Eindhoven where it took part in fighting at Son on the Wilhelmina Canal and near Veghel. During the battle for Overloon this Panther was hit by a Piat grenade on October 13 fired by 2nd Battalion of the East Yorkshire Regiment. The crew were all killed.

The museum opened to the public in May 1946 and during its first year had 40,000 visitors. This rose by 10,000 the subsequent year and steadily thereafter until in 1974, visitors numbered 200,000, including Germans, Americans, and 20,000 British.

Help was forthcoming from the Dutch government for the extension of the museum and in 1948 the Canadian Windsor Carrier (Exhibit 15) arrived with the British six-pounder anti-tank gun MkII (Exhibit 14) and the 25-pounder Gun Howitzer Mk II (Exhibit 32) which had belonged to the 76th Field Artillery Regiment of No. 8 Army Group, Royal Artillery, one of the units taking part in the October battle.

From an American dump in Heidelberg

Top: The Valentine MkII bridge-laying tank, Exhibit 23 (note that the exhibit numbers have been changed since we took our photographs). Centre: Exhibit 4, the Cromwell MkIV, put out of action by a shot in the engine. Below: The Churchill MkV, Exhibit 43, which ran into a minefield.

came the M8 armoured car (Exhibit 42), and the White half-track (Exhibit 30), this particular vehicle designed to carry the 81mm mortar.

The Overloon museum is unique in that so many of the exhibits on display were knocked out or captured during the fighting in and around the forest in which the museum is situated. The British carrier (Exhibit 7), converted into a flame-thrower, was used by the 11th Armoured Division and the M4 Sherman (Exhibit 18) was abandoned during the first American attack when it overturned into a ditch. The other Sherman displayed (Exhibit 9) received two hits from a German 75mm anti-tank gun on the bottom right-hand side and one from an 88mm gun on the edge of the turret on October 4, 1944. The American crew were killed and are buried at Henri-Chapelle.

Perhaps the most impressive exhibit is No. 16, a Sherman V 'Flail' tank. It was used in the final stages of the Battle of Overloon by the 22nd Dragoons of the British 79th Armoured Division and put out of action at Limburg by a Panzerfaust.

Above: The Panther V, Exhibit 2, knocked out by a Piat grenade on October 13, 1944 and later towed to the museum site as one of the first exhibits.

Above: Exhibit 42, the American M8 Armoured car with its 37mm gun powered by a 110hp Hercules 1XD engine came from a dump at Heidelberg.

Above: The Sherman M4, Exhibit 9, which received two 75mm hits on the right-hand side and an 88mm, which dislodged the turret, fired by Luftwaffefestungsbataillon X near Hattert Castle.

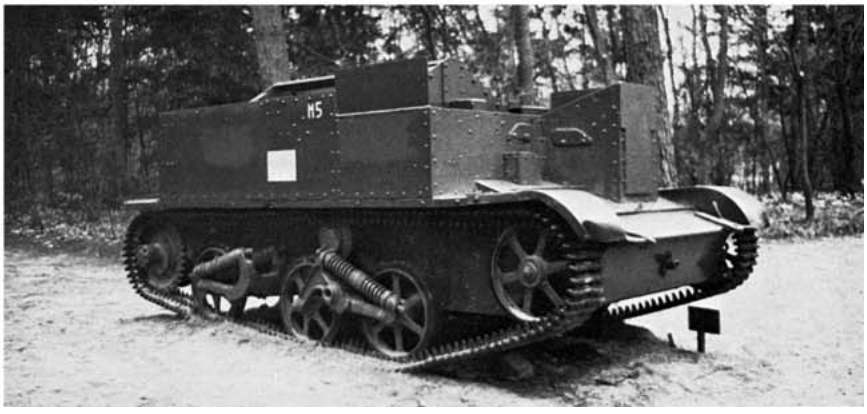
Minefields played an important part in the German defences around Overloon and one of the exhibits (17) shows a reconstruction of a minefield containing Riegel mines—a type of mine which could withstand 800lbs pressure and was exploded by trip wires. Heavy casualties were caused by these mines during the battle. The German plans of the minefields were never found and great difficulty was experienced after the war clearing tens of thousands of mines from the area.

Exhibit 3 is particularly interesting; an American M1918A1-3 field gun captured by the Germans in WW1 and pressed into service during WWII until it was knocked out by a Typhoon near Overloon.

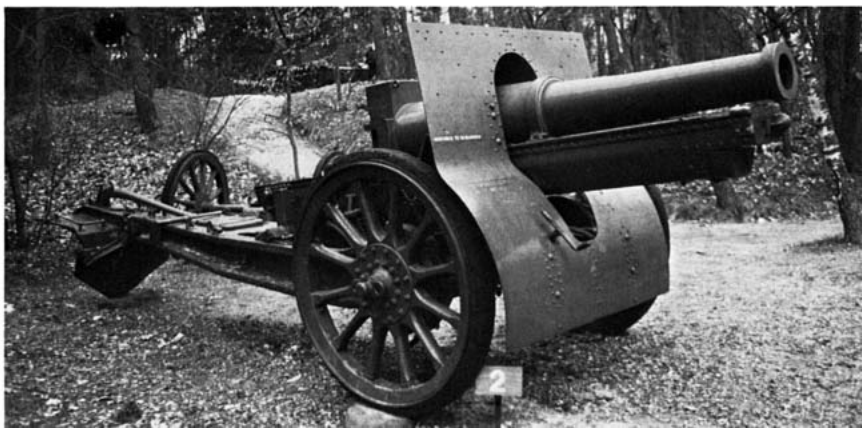
The DUKW (Exhibit 6), in a rather dilapidated state, had its suspension shot away by a German anti-tank gun.

The Valentine MkII bridge-laying tank (Exhibit 23) is realistically displayed with its bridge having just been laid across a crater.

As the museum has expanded, items have been brought in unconnected with the local battle, such as a V1, sea mines, midget submarines and aircraft.



Above right: The US 6x6 DUKW, 'Exhibit 6,' looking rather sorry for itself after its suspension was shot off during the battle by a German anti-tank gun firing across the River Meuse. Right: The British 3in Mortar Carrier converted into a flame thrower was used by 3rd Battalion, The Monmouthshire Regiment, part of the British 11th Armoured Division.



Top: The B25 Mitchell and, centre, the PR XI Spitfire (Siegfried Bunke). Above: Exhibit 3, the American M1918A-3 155mm Field Gun captured by the Germans in WWI and used by them in WW2 only to be put out of action at Overloon by a British Typhoon.

The two aeroplanes displayed are a Spitfire PR MkXI, serial PL965, and a B25 Mitchell, USAAF serial 41-30792. The Spitfire was built at Aldermaston during 1944, one of a batch of 227 PR XIs. It was delivered to No. 9 Maintenance Unit at RAF Cosford on October 2, 1944 and to RAF Benson, home of photo-reconnaissance, on January 5, 1945. It was sent to No. 16 Squadron RAF then stationed at Melsbroek, Belgium, on January 18. On April 15, the squadron moved to Eindhoven and, when the war ended, to a new base in Germany. When No. 16 Squadron was disbanded on October 19, 1945 the aircraft was left in Germany as war surplus.

There it remained until, in the summer of 1947, the Dutch Air Force needed instructional airframes for the newly forming Technical Training School at Deelen aerodrome. PL965 was ferried to Holland on July 10 with seven other Spitfires. Dutch markings were added over the RAF wartime finish and it was used for engine instruction until 1950 when Gloster Meteors were introduced and the Spitfires consigned to the scrap heap.

In 1952 only PL965 (in brown and green camouflage and RAF roundels) survived as a static display at Deelen. The photographic equipment had been removed before it had been delivered to the Dutch Air Force; the radio, instruments, wheels, fuel lines etc. had been removed later.

In 1959 it was donated to the Overloon Museum in answer to the request for a Spitfire and in 1973 was repainted in wartime colours with the addition of D-Day invasion stripes.

The B25 Mitchell was delivered to England in November 1943 to No. 320 Squadron (Dutch) at RAF Dunfold. Its RAF serial number became FR 193 and it was held in reserve until it joined a training flight in March 1944. Its first operational mission took place on August 14, 1944. The squadron was moved to Melsbroek in October and from then until April 25, 1945 it flew 105 operational missions.

At the end of the war all the 320 Squadron Mitchells were stored at RAF Kirkbride, and all were transferred to the Dutch Air Force on July 22, 1947. There its serial number was again changed (to A-17) and it served with No. 5 and No. 8 Squadrons. It was written off charge on April 14, 1954, handed over to the Dutch National Aviation Museum at Deelen and later transferred to Overloon.

As well as the outdoor exhibits displayed in natural surroundings, the Museum building offers a Weapon Hall, Chapel and a Documentation Centre. The latter provides displays through models, maps and photographs, etc., showing how the Second World War affected Holland and, in the words of the official guide, 'is intended to be a warning and indictment of the inhuman violence of war itself . . . addressed in particular to our post-war youth. It is hoped that the Museum will thus foster the idea of peace and improve international understanding.'

AFTER THE BATTLE

IT HAPPENED HERE

Hitler at Landsberg

On November 8, 1923, Adolf Hitler had attempted his bid for power in Munich, now called the Beer Hall Putsch. It failed, in bloodshed, on the morning of the 9th and Hitler escaped to the country house of Ernst Hanfstaengls at Uffing where, two days later, he was arrested.

Hitler's trial, together with that of nine of his followers, began the following year on February 24 in the old Infantry School in the Blutenburgstrasse in Munich. Twenty-four days later, in spite of Article 81 of the German Penal Code which laid down life imprisonment for attempting to overthrow the State, he was sentenced to five years imprisonment to be served at Landsberg, forty miles south-west of Munich.

Imprisonment was an opportunity for Hitler to begin dictation of his book 'Mein Kampf'. Preliminary notes were taken down by an ex-convict Emil Maurice, but soon Hitler was joined in prison by Rudolf Hess, who had escaped the November arrests. There at Landsberg, almost an honoured guest in a cell of his own, he began in earnest to dictate chapter after chapter of his book. Initially it was to be called 'Four and a Half Years Struggle against Lies, Stupidity and Cowardice', but his publisher rebelled against such an unsaleable title and it came out simply as 'My Struggle'. The book was dedicated on October 16, 1924 to the sixteen of his followers who had died in the Putsch.

A few photographs exist of Hitler at Landsberg taken by his personal photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann, who has described how he achieved them:

I was lucky enough to be among those who succeeded in obtaining permission to visit Hitler in prison. Even so, there were endless formalities before I and the huge basket of fruit which I had brought for him and his fellow prisoners stood before him.

Hitler was obviously very popular with the prison officials for willing warders helped me to carry my heavy burden through the labyrinth of corridors and squares, through which I had to pass. My camera, unfortunately, I had to leave in the guard-room, for photography was forbidden. It did not, however, matter very much, for I had managed to conceal another camera about me.

Above: The photograph Heinrich Hoffmann took outside the city gate at Landsberg five days before Christmas, 1924, often wrongly captioned as the prison (Hoffmann). Below: Fifty years later the After the Battle team returned to the same spot. Were he still alive Hitler would be 85 years old!

The picture taken on the camera Hoffmann smuggled into Landsberg during Hitler's imprisonment (Hoffmann).

This I managed to pass surreptitiously to a confederate among the warders, who took a photo for me after we left the cell and handed back the camera to me before we left Landsberg.

The presiding judge at the trial had said that Hitler would be eligible for parole after six months and in a little under nine months after he was sentenced, he was released from Landsberg—on December 20.

Heinrich Hoffmann again takes up the story:

A few days before Christmas, 1924, Adolf Muller, the proprietor of the Munich Publishing House (of the Volkischer Beobachter—Ed.), came to see me. 'Would you like to come on a little picnic with me?' he asked, 'to Landsberg.' I understood, of course. He was going to visit Hitler. To be on the safe side, I took my camera with me. One never knows one's luck.

I was surprised to see that Muller did not take his chauffeur with him, but drove his big Daimler-Benz himself. As we settled in the car, he told me that he was going to fetch Hitler! Very few people,' he added, 'know the exact date and time at which he will be released.' This, indeed, was a surprise!

But so tremendous and persistent had been the pressure of public opinion, that the Government had felt itself compelled to release him within a few short months.

Very soon the big Daimler-Benz drew up outside Landsberg Fortress. I got out and prepared my camera. Then I heard a grinding noise—the gates were being opened. The historic moment, apparently, was upon us! But in reality, it was not! It was only the uniformed gate-keeper, who drew my attention to the fact that all photography was forbidden. I retorted that he was exceeding his authority, which did not stretch beyond the confines of the fortress itself; to which he

Left: In 1934 Hitler revisited the prison in the company of some of his fellow prisoners including Maurice, on his right, and Schaub on his left (Hutchinson). Above: We were told by the guard that these particular steps have now been demolished (Bundesarchiv).

replied quite calmly that if I ignored his warning, he would confiscate my camera. This was more than I was prepared to stand, and I demanded to see the Director. The Director was friendly, but quite firm. 'Instructions from the Government,' he said. 'Hitler is not to be photographed as he leaves the fortress.' And that was that.

Angrily I returned to the car. 'I have no luck with Hitler,' I yelled in Muller's ear. 'First of all he himself wouldn't let me photograph him, and now other people forbid it.'

And I told him of my interview with the Director.

At that moment Hitler came out through the gateway. With a terse greeting, he stepped swiftly into the car, and we drove off.

'I'm glad that you have come along,' he said, turning to me; 'now you can photograph me without let or hindrance.'

'I haven't noticed it,' I retorted, and I told him of my passage of arms with the fortress authorities. It seemed to me essential that a photograph to mark the occasion should be taken in Landsberg itself; and if that were not possible in front of the fortress, then I must take one elsewhere. I suggested that we stop by the old city gates, where we would still retain something of the fortress atmosphere. To this Hitler agreed, and I took several pictures.

The same day, I sent the photographs to all the various home and foreign newspapers, with the caption 'Adolf Hitler leaves Landsberg Fortress.' As I anticipated the picture was published all over the world. But when I received my copies, I could not help laughing. Not a single newspaper had used my caption. Instead: 'The first step to freedom'—'The Fortress Gate has opened'—'On to new deeds'—'Thoughtfully, Hitler stands in front of his prison—what will he do now?'

What Hitler actually did was to say to me: 'Get a move on, Hoffmann, or we'll have a crowd collecting; and anyway, it's bloody cold!'

Ten years later, when Hitler was Chancellor of the German Reich, he returned to Landsberg with Heinrich Hoffmann to look at his cell:

'What a difference! All, from the Governor downwards to the warders, were sent for to receive Hitler's personal thanks for their considerate treatment while he was under their supervision. The cell itself had not changed at all. But on the table lay a copy of Mein Kampf, in the midst of a laurel wreath, and everywhere there were flowers in profusion.

'Hitler posed beside the barred window. With a far-away look in his eyes he turned to me.

'Well, Hoffmann, now you can photograph me in my cell,' he said, 'without any fear of restriction.' Then, 'It was here,' he added, 'that I wrote Mein Kampf; not even prison bars can prevent epoch-making ideas from finding their way to the minds and hearts of the people.'

It again fell to the 101st Airborne Division to be in on one of the prizes on their route through Southern Germany and this time they did not have to contend with the Third Army. Landsberg fell to the 10th Armoured Division on April 27, 1945. Over the years Hitler's cell had become a shrine; the window was marked with a wreath and swastika flag and a copy of Mein Kampf lay on the table. Over the door was a bronze plaque reading:

> Here a dishonourable system imprisoned Germany's Greatest son from November 11, 1923, to December 20, 1924. During this time Adolf Hitler wrote the book of the National Socialist Revolution, Mein Kampf.

This plaque quickly disappeared to souvenir hunters.

The prison was taken over by the American Military Government and retained by them until 1955. Today it is a Landes prison and Hitler's cell is used as a work room.

Naturally, on our visit there, it was too much to expect permission to photograph inside the prison, and the editor was dissuaded from entering by other means! The prison had recently been in the news as one of the members of the Baeder-Meinhof gang, held in Landsberg, was released after pressure was brought on the German Government during the Berlin election. We knocked at the gates and, unlike Hoffmann's treatment fifty

Private Salvatore J. Trovato of New York with the 101st Airborne Division photographed by Technician 5th Grade Smith in Hitler's cell on April 30, 1945. The cell had become a Nazi shrine over the years (US Signal Corps).

The walls of the prison looked exceedingly uninviting (above) so we took the easy way and knocked at the front door! (left).

years before, were told that Hitler's cell could be seen from a road at the side of the sports field: using a telephoto lens, we took a reasonable comparison from a safe distance!

As we left the town we stopped outside the old city gate, just as Hitler had done exactly fifty years previously in December 1924, to match the history-making picture Hoffman had taken.

Right: The cell window photographed by T/5 Smith as it was found by the 101st Airborne (US Signal Corps). Above: Overlooking the prison sports field the editor uses a telephoto lens to match as near as possible (photo below) the same shot in April 1975—30 years later.